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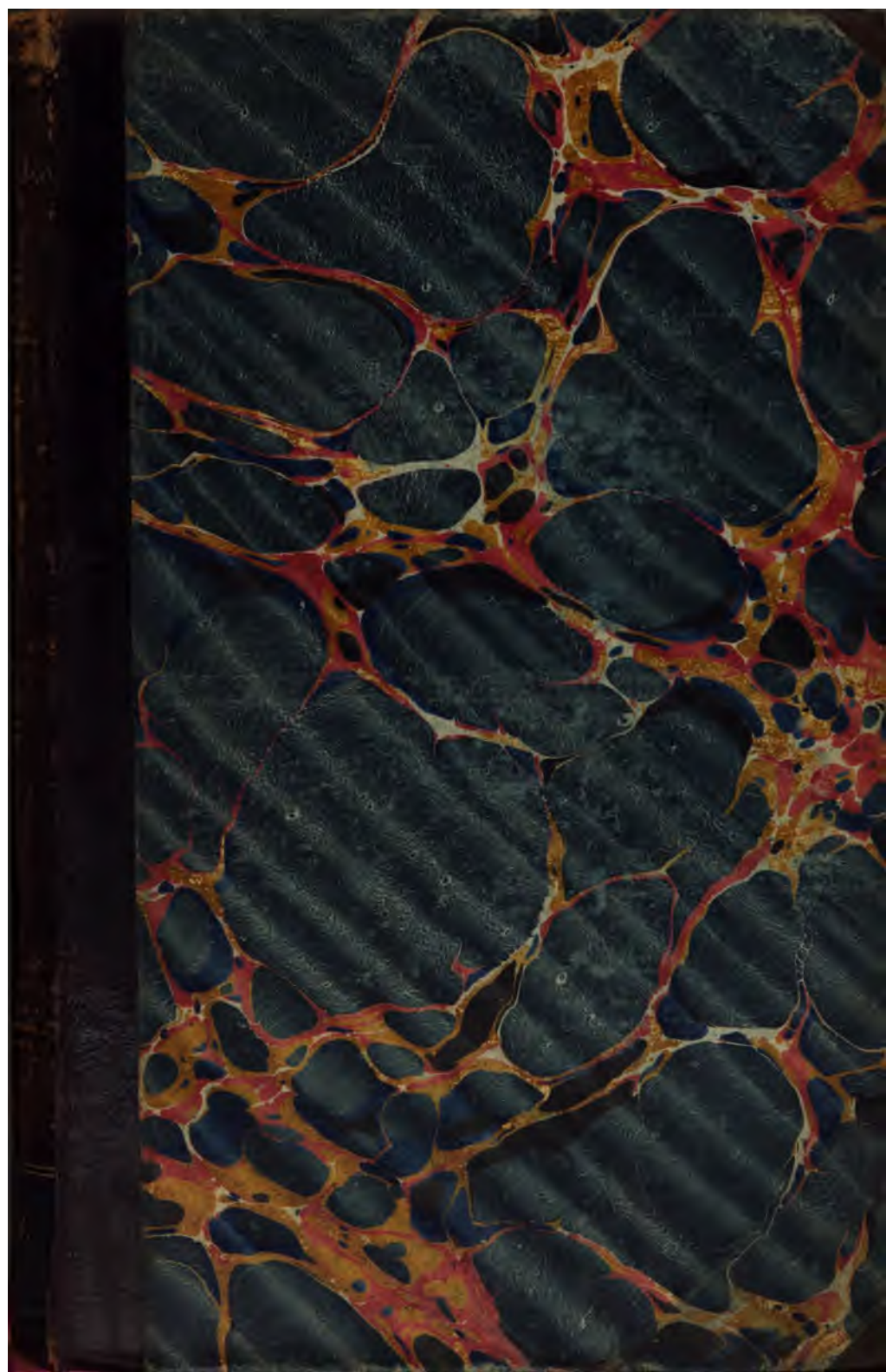
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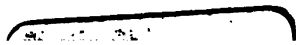
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# MASTER AND PUPIL.

## CHAPTER I.

### ALONE.

HAD it been my own mother whose death left me alone in the world, I might have mourned for her as other orphans mourn, albeit amidst our limited circle of acquaintances I had, from my earliest recollections, been denounced as cold hearted and apathetic in a very unfeminine degree. But it was *not* my own mother, and therefore, there could be no just reason why I, or anybody else, should even assume that the long

illness which followed her removal was in any degree connected with grief for the personal loss I had sustained.

And yet if grief can be represented by a depression so intense, that under its influence the laughing summer earth appears sitting clothed in sackcloth, with ashes sprinkled on its head, then grief there was, from some cause or other, mysteriously bound up with, and augmenting the physical weakness which had kept me already five tedious weeks chained to a sick room, and from which the professional gentleman who was good enough to visit me, gave me at present no hope of release.

"Patience," I often said to myself, as my aching eyes caught the bright sunlight playing amongst the tall trees that waved before my window, "patience—the poor bird who wanted liberty, beat its wings against its iron cage and

died. Life is sweeter than even liberty to the young, and I am young in years at least, so courage, faint heart, to-morrow may bring something better than to-day."

But generally speaking, the morrow only brought more pain, more languor, more weariness of everything around me, or a visit from some curious neighbour, who wanted to judge for herself, whether Miss Dorothy's illness was a sham or a reality.

I remember distinctly, the first sensation of anything like returning health. It was after the first night of unbroken sleep I had enjoyed since my step-mother's death. I opened my eyes as the servant came into the room, but there was an intense luxury in the drowsiness that still oppressed me, that made the utterance of a single word appear impossible; and so I lay perfectly quiet, watching her as she moved about, and set things

in order, and longing for the moment when she would go out and leave me quite alone again. Her unmusical voice soon, however, broke the charm.

"It's the most beautifullest morning you ever saw, Miss Dorothy. I know you are going to be better to-day, for I had a dream about you last night. Now do just look how that laburnum tree is come out since yesterday; every one of its blossoms is for all the world like golden feathers. I don't believe it would hurt you to have this window open a bit. The air's soft enough for a new born babby, that's what it is."

"Then do open the window pray, Charlotte; I long to feel the breeze that is doing good to everything but me. Ah, that is delicious, indeed, I think I shall get well now."

"To be sure you will, miss; I never thought no otherwise, only them doctors must make long faces. What shall I get you for breakfast?"

"I wonder if there are any strawberries ripe in the garden; I could enjoy a few so much."

"Then I'll go and see this very minute; sick people ought just to have whatever they can fancy, poor critturs. And, oh! dear, how stupid I am; here's a letter as come by post this morning. You can read it while I'm gone, only don't hurt your eyes, Miss Dorothy, because the doctor says you havn't got over strong ones, and it's my opinion that crying isn't the best of lotions for weak sight."

The moment I was alone I sat up in bed, examined with half sleepy curiosity the handwriting on the outside of this unexpected letter, decided that it must relate to some business matter that would be alike incomprehensible and uninteresting to me, and finally broke the seal. The contents were as follows:—

"MY DEAR MISS HEATHCOTT,—“ Having until last week been with all my family absent from home, travelling on the continent for the health of my youngest daughter, who died on the 1st of May at Florence, I only heard yesterday of my poor sister, Mrs. Heathcott's death at Watermere. In spite of the unhappy estrangement so long existing between us, the intelligence has affected me deeply, and as I am anxious to hear some details connected with her last illness, as well as to discover whether I can be of any service to yourself, I propose coming to Watermere early in the approaching week. My wife and daughters join me in kind regards and best wishes.

“I am, my dear Miss Heathcott,

“Yours very faithfully,

“RICHARD ERROL.”

This letter, though altogether unlooked for,

excited for the time neither gratitude nor any other emotion. I thought it badly expressed, and made up my mind that Mr. Richard Errol had profited little by his continental trip. Then I wondered whether the wife and daughters, who had sent their kind regards to me, had anything to do with the business in the City, which my poor step-mother used to speak of with such unfeigned abhorrence; but by this time Charlotte had returned with my breakfast, consisting of a glass of new milk, with about a dozen of fresh, ripe, delicious looking strawberries, and in the eager discussion of the first meal I had enjoyed for many a long day, my well meaning correspondent was entirely forgotten, and the next thing that brought him to my remembrance was a half waking dream in the middle of that day, in which I saw myself bending tearfully over the grave of the young daughter he had buried at Florence.



From this time my recovery was rapid, and long before a single pendant blossom had faded from the magnificent laburnum tree, I was able to sit up by the ever open window, and drink in those sweet sounds and sights of a late but unusually beautiful spring, which my dreary confinement had given me more than common facilities for enjoying.

I never felt or mourned the solitude to which I was condemned, while lounging in an invalid chair with a book in my lap that was seldom looked at, I gazed out dreamily on the fair and sunny picture spread out before me. I heeded not that the grass of the lawn had grown long and yellow, that the shrubs were untrimmed and straggling, that weeds were beginning to overrun the once carefully kept flower beds. I saw only the bright blossoms everywhere bending in the summer breeze to woo and kiss each other;

I heard only the joyous shouting of the birds in the clearest of summer skies, and my imagination (I have already said that I was supposed to be without a heart) reveled too luxuriously in this external beauty, for any minor imperfections, or contrasts between the past and present, to interfere with my enjoyment.

But then it must be acknowledged that with the past I had very few agreeable associations, and that the love of nature was decidedly the strongest passion with which I had been endowed.

Had I been in robust health instead of just recovering from an illness which had brought me to the brink of the grave, I might perhaps have had some anxious and uneasy speculations concerning the future, a future which to all human appearance was as dim and misty as the dreariest of November days; but I was spared all this by

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the physical weakness that still beset me, aided I have no doubt by a natural tendency of my mind to indolence and indifference, concerning everything that referred to the uninteresting routine of daily life and duty.

Once thoroughly roused by extraordinary or exciting events, I could be as active and energetic as most people, but my normal state was one of frigid quietude, and this had gained for me the character for cold heartedness I have above alluded to, a character I was content to accept for myself, although as a matter of taste I considered it the most unlovely and unloveable that could belong to womanhood.

But enough of Dorothy Heathcott for a little while. I have now to make my reader acquainted with an equally original, and much more estimable an individual.

CHAPTER II.

RICHARD ERROL, SENIOR.

"A gentleman to see you, Miss," said Charlotte, opening my door one morning so abruptly that I fairly started from my chair, "may I bring him up?"

"Did he give you no card or name to bring to me, Charlotte? You know I am not in a condition to receive strangers."

"He said, miss, as how you were expecting

him, so I thought it was all right. I am sure you couldn't look no nicer than you do nor the room neither. I'll be bound he doesn't see such flowers as them every day. I should think from his dress and hair, he's from London or thereabouts."

"Is there anything peculiar about the gentleman's hair, Charlotte?"

The truth was, not that I felt the slightest interest in the point in question, but that illness and solitude had made me somewhat nervous, and I wanted to delay the moment of my introduction to Mr. Richard Errol.

"Well, I don't know about peculiar, miss, but it looks different to people's hair in these parts. He's a fine gentleman though, and not much older than our vicar."

"Well, I believe he must come up, Charlotte. You told him that I was still in my bedroom."

"I did to be sure, but he said as how he didn't mind if you didn't, or some such words. May I bring him now?"

"Yes, and get some wine and sandwiches ready by the time I ring for them."

Mr. Errol mounted the stairs with a firm noisy tread, and almost before I could reply to his quick summons for admittance, was standing beside me in the room.

A large, strongly built, and not unpleasing looking man, dressed with quaker-like simplicity, and wearing his hair so low over his brows that the forehead, which would have been otherwise the best part of his face, was almost entirely concealed.

"Miss Heathcott, I am glad to make your acquaintance; your servant tells me you have had a long illness."

He shook hands as he spoke, not with much

warmth, however, and then sat down in a chair opposite my own.

"Yes," I replied to his last observation, "I have been a prisoner in this room for what seems to me an exceedingly weary time, but I am getting well very fast now. I am much obliged to you for your present visit."

"No need. I have pleased myself by coming. Will it tire you to answer a few questions about the affairs of the late Mrs. Heathcott?"

"Not in the least, but I must first confess to you that with regard to all business matters I am profoundly ignorant and stupid. I shall have to begin my A. B. C., now that I am alone in the world."

Mr. Errol only bowed politely in reply to my really truthful assertion, and seeing he waited for me to continue, I did so, with a little more reserve than I had yet manifested.

"I know that my step-mother had a life interest in a sum of money, the principal of which will now be shared between her two daughters, who are both married and living in America. The furniture of this house was all she had the power of leaving according to her own pleasure, and that she has left to me."

"Quite right, quite right, but kind too, since she had children of her own. May I venture to enquire whether you inherit any property from Mr. Heathcott?"

"None whatever; my father failed soon after he married your sister, and the furniture, I have before mentioned, was all that remained of the large fortune he brought his wife."

"I remember hearing of this. It was a great trial for poor Margaret, whose heart was always too much set upon the foolish baubles of this world. But you, also, Miss Heathcott, must



have been of an age to feel the change of circumstances severely."

I fancied my visitor looked more intently at me in saying this than he had hitherto done; but I was able to reply confidently:

"I did not feel it in the least. Wealth had never made me happy, and the loss of it never made me miserable. My step-mother was too proud to be mean or 'little' in any way, and even after my father's death, she treated me exactly as she had done before, and would not hear of my leaving her to earn a livelihood for myself."

"Poor Margaret," he said, with ill-concealed emotion, "this was at least nobly and generously done, but pride should not have been the instigator. You were attached to my sister, Miss Heathcott?"

"I respected her greatly," I replied, quenching as I spoke, some of the soft light which I

had observed gradually kindling in the eyes of my companion, "but I believe neither she nor myself possessed many of those affinities of character which induce friendship between members of the same family. We never interfered with each other, and our home was quiet enough to suit the tastes of both."

"There were no children by this marriage I believe?"

"No; and the Miss Wentworths marrying immediately after their mother, our family circle has always been a very circumscribed one. The solitude to which I am at present condemned, seems little greater than that to which I have for many years been accustomed."

I thought he looked pityingly at me, and I hastened to say—

"But do not suppose, Mr. Errol, that I am complaining of this. On the contrary, I like it

much better than I should like any society that it has ever been my lot to come in contact with."

"Are you so badly off for friends and acquaintances in this neighbourhood?"

"Watermere is a populous village, and there are plenty of families living here in our own sphere of life, but Mr. Heathcott had bad health and hated visiting, and I am not one to be sought for myself alone."

"May I enquire your age, Miss Heathcott?"

"I am twenty three. I was fourteen when my father married your sister."

"And before this you had led a gayer life, I presume?"

"Before this I had been at school, and knew no life but that of a school girl. My own mother died when I was a year old."

"And now let me ask what are your plans for the future."

His abruptness rather startled but did not displease me. I liked a man to be frank and straightforward.

"I have no definite plans, Mr. Errol, at present, but I suppose as I can neither write books nor paint portraits, nor sew fast nor well enough to earn my bread by it, I shall have to fall back upon poor woman's hacknied resource, and go out as a governess."

"Are you fit for it?"

"I don't know I'm sure. I can play, and sing, and draw, and do a little in French and Italian; these I believe are the chief requisites."

"Not in my estimation. I had taken all these ladylike accomplishments for granted when I asked you the question, which referred to your moral fitness for the office of governess."

"I don't understand you."

"I meant simply to ask whether your temper,

disposition, tastes, and general tone of mind were such as to qualify you for the task you propose undertaking."

"In all probability *not*; but what then, Mr. Errol? Am I to starve because I am deficient in certain organs, whose possession would after all only render my burden lighter to myself, and concerning the existence of which my employers will never dream of questioning me?"

He smiled rather grimly as he said—

"We do not argue from the same point, Miss Heathcott; but I must not tire you with my explanations and sentiments just now. I will only add that the alternative of starving need never for a moment distress you, since I am authorized by my wife to offer you a permanent home in our family, provided you do not share my poor sister's prejudice against tradespeople and dissenters."

For the first time since Mr. Errol had been in the room, I felt the colour mounting to my cheeks and forehead. I replied without my usual self-possession :

“You are very good indeed, and I am not conscious of having imbibed any of my step-mother’s prejudices, but unless you have children to teach or take care of, I cannot accept your offered kindness.”

The face that was looking so benevolently into mine clouded dismally for an instant, and when he spoke I should scarcely have recognized the voice to which I had been listening for the last ten minutes.

“I have no children to be taught now, Miss Heathcott. My girls have done with school-room duties, and my son is studying for the bar. Annie was our only little one, and she has been removed to another home.”

I felt for the bereaved father, as a vision of his lost Annie rose up suddenly before my mind's eye, but I had no fit words of condolence at hand, so I said nothing; and I have no doubt, like the rest of the world, he set me down at once as a cold and heartless woman.

As abruptly as Mr. Errol's composure had left him it returned to him again, and declining the refreshments which Charlotte in the meanwhile had brought into the room, he resumed the conversation as if nothing beyond business matters had been touched upon.

"In this case it only remains to seek a situation for you, Miss Heathcott, as soon as you are well enough to undertake it, unless indeed you will consent to pay my wife and daughters a visit in London, during which we shall have more time to make enquiries for a home likely to suit you."

"I shall have much pleasure in doing this, Mr. Errol. I believe the term for which Mrs. Heathcott held our house will expire in a week or two, and I understand a tenant has been found for it."

"And what do you intend doing with the furniture? It appears handsome and in good condition."

"Yes, they tell me it is worth two or three hundred pounds. I must sell it by auction, or to the gentleman who has taken the house. I know just enough of life to be aware that I cannot begin it without money."

"It is certainly a grave essential, Miss Heathcott," said my visitor rising and placing his chair with scrupulous exactness against the wall from which it had been taken, "but if I had on the fabled wishing cap, I would wish you something better and more essential than even this to



begin your new life with. I have tired you however with my long visit, and will therefore bid you good morning."

"You do not leave Watermere to-day?"

"No, and I shall hope to have the pleasure of calling on you to-morrow."

We shook hands with a trifle more warmth than on the first occasion, and parted.

## CHAPTER III.

## LAST DAYS AT WATERMERE.

WHEN Mr. Errol called the next day, I was surprised and really very grateful to find that he had accomplished an interview with the gentleman who was to succeed Mrs. Heathcott as tenant in the house that I at present occupied, and persuaded him to become a purchaser, at a valuation, of my legacy furniture.

This, he said, would save me a great deal of trouble and anxiety, as I should have nothing to

do now but to receive the money, pack up my own property, and travel under an escort Mr. Errol would provide, to London, where he trusted I would remain as long as himself and his family could make their quiet home agreeable to me.

Of course I thanked him for all his kindness, and said how glad I was to have somebody to think and act for me; and then, with much delicacy, Mr. Errol questioned me as to the present state of my finances, and seemed hardly satisfied with my assurance that I had plenty of ready money in the house.

If he were a tradesman, he had an open hand and a generous heart, and though I had always been rather inclined to palliate, if not entirely to justify my step-mother's shrinking from her city relations, I could not help reflecting now, that she had probably missed much comfort and happiness in keeping so wholly aloof from them.

On this occasion Mr. Errol made more minute enquiries concerning his poor sister, than he had done on the previous day, and seemed, I thought, particularly anxious to obtain some account of her last moments. I could only tell him that she manifested no fear of death, and that the clergyman of the parish, who had visited her constantly from the time she took to her bed, appeared satisfied that all was right in a spiritual point of view.

Mr. Errol looked so exceedingly grave while I was giving him this information, that I made a mental note to the effect that my poor step-mother had at least been correct in setting down her brother as a determined fanatic. And I felt sorry that a man with such an apparently vigorous and well directed mind, should possess this unhappy weakness.

In bidding me farewell, Mr. Errol asked me

how soon I expected to be well enough to travel; and when I named a week from that time, he said I might rely upon his sending somebody before the day appointed, to assist me in my final preparations, and to take charge of me on my journey to London.

I told him I thought I was quite capable of taking care of myself, and that it would be a pity to give anybody so much unnecessary trouble. In reply to this, he only smiled in his grave way, and left me in doubt as to whether he would persevere in his original kind intention or not.

The last week of my stay in the home that had so long sheltered me, and where at least I had enjoyed tranquillity and freedom from any serious cares or annoyances, was, upon the whole, a melancholy one. I could not wander through the silent rooms, or round the beautiful but neglected

gardens without a strange thrill of sadness, and a feeling of growing desolation which struck me as unnatural, considering that it was only a step-mother that I had lost, and the little real sympathy that had ever existed between us. But at length I accounted for it on the ground of my possessing a kind of feline attachment to localities, and this once settled I indulged my sorrow without restraint, and often gave real uneasiness to poor Charlotte (the only person I believe in all Watermere who felt the slightest interest in me), by the long, passionate fits of crying with which I generally concluded every day.

One evening, it was nearly the last, I sent her on an errand into the village which I knew would detain her some time, and wrapping a warm shawl around me I strolled out into the garden, promising myself that there should be no tears

to-night, but only a mute farewell to all the familiar objects I never expected to look upon again.

In spite of my resolution, however, tears would come as I put aside the thick, waving branches of the lilac and laburnum trees, and stood for a minute under their perfumed shade, trying to realise and comprehend the extent of my loneliness and desolation.

I did not half like the idea of beginning my wandering life by a visit to Mr. Errol's family. It seemed to me that I should have had more strength and courage had I been compelled to labour amongst strangers at once. I felt intuitively that the Errols would not suit me any more than I should suit them; and something that was less gentle than a sigh mingled with my tears, as I reflected that I never had possessed a single real friend in my

whole life, and that in all probability I never should.

In a general way, this thought gave me little uneasiness—hitherto, at least, it had not done so; but illness had begun the task of weakening my mind, and the anticipation of being transplanted to London had completed it.

From the time of my coming with my father to Watermere, on his marriage with his second wife, I had never left it, and, although I had no dread of London on its own account, I did shrink with no common horror from the idea of exchanging the fair and lovely scenes of the unrivalled lake country, for the noise, and dirt, and confusion of a large and thickly peopled city.

I had walked, and thought, and cried, weak woman that I was, till I was fairly worn out in mind as well as body, when just as I had decided



on returning to the parlour and lying down till Charlotte came in, a loud ring at the entrance gate gave me a sudden start, and obliged me to hasten round with my veil pulled over my face, to ascertain who it could be.

Before I reached the spot, I distinguished a gentleman who appeared to be waiting with a very patient aspect on the other side of the railings, and by the time I had come near enough to speak to the stranger, albeit I had only taken a rapid second glance, I felt convinced that the person I had to admit and welcome, was Mr. Errol's son.

It was just as clear as if he had held out a highly glazed card, with the words, Richard Errol, Esq., jun. inscribed thereon.

I had no other reason for believing his name to be Richard, than the very extraordinary likeness between himself and his father, which seemed to

exact a corresponding affinity between their Christian names.

"Can I see Miss Heathcott to-night?" he said (and his voice was the very same I had listened to a week ago), in reply to my somewhat awkward enquiries as to what or whom he wanted.

"I am Miss Heathcott," I answered, opening the gate as I spoke, "and you, I presume, are Mr. Errol's son "

"Yes, but you did not expect me to-night?"

"I did not expect you at all, but your likeness to your father was a sufficient introduction. Will you walk into the house?"

He came with the elder Richard's firm, measured tread by my side.

"My father would have written to apprise you of my intended journey, had I been certain of being able to accomplish it; but it was only

late last night that I knew I could be spared, and under these circumstances we hoped you would excuse the apparent want of ceremony. Had I been prevented coming myself, an old and trusty servant of my father's would have been sent to act as your escort."

I was utterly overwhelmed by all this consideration, and could only say 'thank you,' two or three times over, in my cold and stupid way as I preceded Mr. Errol, junior, into the unlighted parlour, and handed him a chair to sit down.

"I am afraid," he continued when we were there in the dreary twilight, "that I shall have to hurry you rather more than may be agreeable. I must be in London again in the evening of the day after to-morrow. Could you therefore manage to leave Watermere on that morning?"

"Certainly if it is necessary. My packing is

nearly all completed, and my business with the gentleman who has bought the furniture, at an end. I could be ready to-morrow if you would prefer it."

"By no means, but I am obliged to you for your willingness to consult my convenience rather than your own; I hope your health is better than when my father was here."

"Thank you, it is much better; I am indeed comparatively well now. I ought to apologise, Mr. Errol, for keeping you in the dark, but my servant is away in the village, and I should scarcely know where to find the candles myself."

"It is of no importance," he said, with a little smile, that I fancied must have reference to my last assertion, "there is still sufficient light to show me that you are surrounded with the beau-

ties of nature in the home from which I am to have the unthankful task of taking you, Miss Heathcott. You will find nothing like Watermere where you are going."

"I do not expect it."

I was instantly conscious of the cold ungracious manner in which I had spoken, and remembering all my obligations to these kindly meaning people, I added immediately:—

"Are *you* fond of the country, Mr. Errol?"

"I think I should be," he replied, "if it were familiar to me; but I have never lived out of London, and the word *home* comprehends all I have known of happiness or enjoyment."

I did not want him to hear or notice the really bitter sigh that was wrung from me at this innocent observation, I was not even thinking of my companion at the moment, nor of anything but

my own exceeding loneliness and isolation in the world.

He did notice it, however, for in spite of the dim twilight, I saw his look of vexation at himself, and his next words were spoken in a lower and softer voice, and suggested much more than they actually expressed.

"My sisters, Miss Heathcott, are very anxious to make your acquaintance, and you would have smiled, could you have heard the multitude of charges I received at the last moment to take care of you on the journey."

"They are very very kind—"

I could not get beyond, for the tears that were struggling to have their way once more, but which I was determined my companion should not see.

And then, to my relief I heard Charlotte's step in the hall, and begging Mr. Errol to excuse me

while I ordered candles, I ran out of the room, and had brought all my features back to their accustomed calmness before I returned to him again.

## CHAPTER IV.

RICHARD ERROL, JUNIOR.

By the aid of the bright lamp-light I was even more struck than at first with the extraordinary likeness between the father and son. The only difference consisted in the youth of my present guest, and the style of wearing his hair, which left a broad and not unhandsome forehead exposed to view. Still, upon the whole, it was not a face that in a young man I could admire. It wanted, I thought, vivacity and animation,



and savoured too much of the precise, puritanic spirit, which, I doubted not, he had inherited from the elder Richard.

On my re-entrance into the parlour, whither the lamp had preceded me, Mr. Errol was looking into some books that lay on the table,—poems, novels, essays, and such like specimens of light and elegant literature.

“You are a great reader, Miss Heathcott, I presume?” and as he asked the question he retained in his hand one of the least meritorious of the scattered volumes.

“Not so inveterate as from my solitary life would appear natural. I like some books with a sort of passion, but I believe really great readers devour everything that comes in their way, and this has never been my weakness.”

“This novel I have now in my hand—is it a favourite of yours?”

"I have not even opened it. Mrs. Heathcott always bought and read the works of that author, because her own theological opinions were there poetised and insisted on; but as I have no theological opinions myself, I could not share my step-mother's partiality for writings that have little else to recommend them."

"When you say you have no theological opinions, Miss Heathcott, I presume you only mean that you side with neither of the parties at present contending for supremacy in the so-called religious world. You cannot mean that you are indifferent altogether to the subject?"

"I am afraid I did mean something very like it," I replied, deciding that my visitor was growing prosy. "I have my own views of religion, of course, but these have been formed in the school of nature alone, unassisted by books or teachers; and every species of contro-

versy, of dogmatising, and of intoleration, I certainly do most heartily dislike."

Mr. Errol laid down the book he had been holding, with a grieved look that made me feel angry, and then took out his watch.

"I have trespassed, I fear, unpardonably on your time, Miss Heathcott, considering how little of it I am able to leave you to make your preparations in. Can I be of any service to you to-morrow?"

"None whatever, thank you, beyond securing my place in the coach for the next morning. If you have no business of your own at Watermere, you will not find your day misemployed by exploring some of the beauties of the neighbourhood.

I meant this as a sort of *amende* for the brusquerie of my former speech.

"I shall not fail to take your advice; and in

doing so I promise myself a very rare pleasure—one that I can carry back with me, in remembrance at least, to the dark and dingy city in which my lot is cast.”

“Are your sisters fond of flowers?”

“Very, and my mother is quite an enthusiast about them.”

“Then I will take them plenty, for the garden is full, and they would all be faded before the new tenant comes in. Can I offer you any refreshment, Mr. Errol?”

He declined my hospitality with suitable thanks; and with a smile that assured me that he had quite forgiven whatever I had said or done amiss, shook hands cordially and left me to my former loneliness.

As I laid back wearily on the sofa, while Charlotte prepared my supper and commented on my white cheeks and heavy eyes, I took myself

severely to task for not being able to like Mr. Errol's son better. I doubted not that he was a very excellent young man; I felt sure indeed that he was worthy of all esteem, and yet somehow or other he pleased me less than his father had done, and I regretted more than ever that I was not going out at once as a governess.

The next day was of course a very busy one, as, independently of my packing, I had to receive the visits of several of my neighbours, who came (I was uncharitable enough to believe) simply to find out what were the future prospects of the poor, penniless girl who had never made herself a single friend amongst them. From this list of busy bodies I ought, however, to except the kind and disinterested physician who had attended me carefully throughout my illness. He came indeed to wish me good bye, but he asked no

questions, and refused to receive the slightest remuneration for his medical services.

This gentleman was the only person in all Watermere, to whom I spoke unreservedly of the future that was before me; but whether he enlightened his inquisitive patients on the subject after my departure, or left them to bewail their original ignorance, I had no means of ascertaining, and in truth I cared very little about the matter.

I had a firm conviction that the day would not pass without another visit from Mr. Errol, and I was right, for when evening came, and tired, both with my physical exertions, and my endeavours to soothe the genuine and rather noisy grief of poor Charlotte, at losing her 'young missis,' as she called me, I was sitting in an easy chair by the window, inhaling for the last time the sweet perfume of my fondly loved flowers,

the garden bell once more sounded loudly, and Richard Errol, junior, came with his measured tread along the graveled walk.

"I have had such a charming day in your beautiful Watermere," were his first words as he sat down at the opposite side of the open window. "I assure you, Miss Heathcott, it is now as much on my own account as on yours that I regret having to leave to-morrow."

"Oh," I replied, "you need not regret it as far as I am concerned. When a plunge has to be made, there is not much wisdom in standing shivering on the brink. I should feel the same," I added quickly, as the apparent rudeness of these words struck even my obtuse mind, "if I were going to Elysium or Arcadia, instead of to London. My attachments are all to places and not to people."

"You give yourself a very strange character,

Miss Heathcott, but without attributing to you any lack of personal tendrilism, I can well imagine that you must have conceived a more than common affection for the fairy-like scenes in which your youth has been spent. They are fascinating enough to warm into enthusiasm even such a dull prosaic nature as mine."

"I am glad you have been pleased. I think you said last night that you had never lived in the country."

"My longest sojourn out of London, was for two months, about three years ago. It was in a pretty, retired village in Kent, where I was sent to be nursed after an illness. Those two months were the brightest and happiest I ever enjoyed. My little sister, Annie, was with me."

"Did you not go abroad with the rest of your family?" I asked, not liking to allude more plainly to the loss they had sustained.



"No; but I was telegraphed for, and arrived in time to see my dear sister before she left us for ever. This has been a heavy blow for all of us. Annie was the pet and darling of the family."

I wondered very much at his talking to me of these things. I had never been accustomed to receive confidences, or to be appealed to for sympathy. He ought to have discovered sooner that I had more hard than soft places in my heart.

For the sake of saying something I asked how old Annie had been.

"Only fifteen," he said, "and from the delicacy which consumption always brings with it she looked much younger. Her hair was about the shade of yours, Miss Heathcott, but her eyes bluer, and her complexion, even in health, much paler."

I knew I was not in the least good-looking, and I therefore felt annoyed with him for regarding me so fixedly while he was speaking.

Perhaps my countenance expressed discontent, for suddenly it seemed to strike my companion that he might possibly be boring instead of entertaining me. He rose from his seat, looked out for a second or two rather thoughtfully into the garden, and then, advising me to go to bed early, said good night, and promised to call for me and my luggage by seven o'clock the next morning.

"Well, howsomever, Miss," exclaimed poor country-bred Charlotte, as she was helping to undress me for the last time, and, truth to tell, we were both crying together, "howsomever, you'll have a beau for certain where you're going, and he's not so ordinary neither."

"If you mean Mr. Errol, Charlotte," I re-

plied, scarcely able to repress a smile, "he will never be a beau of mine, though I were as crazy as some of the young ladies of Watermere to get married. He is far too wise and good to attract me; and I am far too bad and foolish to attract him, even supposing I had the power of attracting anybody—"

"Lawk, Miss Dorothy, how you *do* talk. I'm sure you might have had as many beaux as other young ladies if you liked, only you don't like, and people can easy see it."

"Exactly: and now do, there's a good girl, make haste and put away my things, for I want if possible to get some sleep to-night."

## CHAPTER V.

## THE HOME IN LONDON.

NOTHING could exceed the care and attention lavished upon me by my friendly escort during our long and tedious journey to London; but I was in no mood then for even acknowledging, much less appreciating, his kindness. My heart was filled to the very brim with sadness, and I don't think I uttered half a dozen words from the time we entered the coach at Watermere, till we left the train at the Euston Square Sta-

tion, which was at about nine o'clock of a warm, oppressive July evening.

"How far are we from your house?" I asked, as the cab into which I had been handed began to rattle furiously through the noisy and crowded streets, and the aching of my head began at the same time to become intolerable.

"We shall be there in fifteen minutes at this pace," replied my companion, looking too happy on his own account at getting home, to make his professed sympathy with my sorrow of the slightest value.

"Do you live in the heart of the city?"

"Not quite. Bloomsbury Square is certainly far from aristocratic, but it is considered airy and agreeable for London; and my father hopes before next summer to have a house at Hampstead or Highgate, both of them delightful localities."

Did he really think that I could be in the most remote degree interested in this—I, with my heavy heart, and my throbbing temples, and my momentarily increasing horror and disgust of all I saw and heard around me?

“You are very tired, I am afraid,” he said, as I leaned my head against the hard cushions of the uncomfortable vehicle, and those foolish tears, that made me despise myself, came unbidden from my eyes.

“Oh, it is nothing,” I replied, striving to speak bravely, and utterly failing in my attempt; “I am distressed at giving you so much trouble and annoyance.”

“You have given me no trouble at all, Miss Heathcott. I am only grieved at being unable to comfort you in any way.”

The words were very kind, and not less so the voice and look that accompanied them; but they

did not reach my heart, which seemed obstinately closed against all human sympathy. I could much more readily have unbosomed myself and all my scarcely-comprehended sorrow to the beautiful flowers that, though drooping now on my lap from heat and want of air, still spoke to me of Watermere, than I could have imparted one troubled or agitating thought to Mr. Richard Errol.

At length the abrupt stopping of our cab warned me that we had reached our destination, and for a moment I lost the consciousness of my own unhappiness in watching the sudden and extraordinary brightening of my companion's countenance. Under the influence of this new born joy, he became positively attractive, and I felt there should be little to dread in an introduction to a family knit together by bonds of such warm and devoted affection.

Still they were nothing to me, nor I to them, and therefore I did dread it in no slight or trivial measure.

They took me at once into the drawing-room, where the ladies were assembled, Richard joining his father, who was writing in the library. I could scarcely see anything at first for the glare of lights which dazzled my eyes and made the pain in my head almost insupportable. But I heard a murmur of pleasant voices, and one above the rest welcoming me to my temporary home with a gentle motherliness that I should never succeed in describing.

Mrs. Errol was a small, slight, young looking woman of about forty-five, and as she took my hot, feverish hands in her own, and said how tired and ill I seemed, and how glad she was to have me safe under her care, I bent down involuntarily to receive the kiss she appeared



waiting to bestow, and felt the great agony in my heart diminishing in its intensity.

Three young ladies then approached and embraced me no less affectionately than their mother had done; and while one divested me of my bonnet, another of my shawl, and the third carried off, with expressions of warm admiration, the colossal bouquet of Watermere flowers that I had brought in with me, I had leisure to observe a fifth individual, who, not being in mourning like the rest of the family, and having hitherto taken no part in this scene of welcomings, I concluded must be a stranger amongst them. She was so rarely and exquisitely pretty, however, that I could not help looking at her attentively the moment I was free to do so, and kind Mrs. Errol following the direction of my eyes, said with the gentlest and pleasantest of little laughs:

"Only think, girls, we have all of us forgotten to present Effie to Miss Heathcott, and there she is, looking like Patience, on a footstool, but deciding no doubt that we are the most ill-bred people in the world."

The fairy creature, softly echoing the laugh, rose from her lowly seat at this, and came towards me and my attendants.

"Indeed, dear Mrs. Errol, I have never had such an idea about you, but I am glad you have remembered to introduce me at last to Miss Heathcott, because I should like to be allowed to do something for her as well as the rest."

"Very well, little one, so you shall. Miss Heathcott, or Dora, as I think we must be privileged to call you, I have the honor of introducing to your especial notice Miss Effie Seymour, a young friend of mine from the country,

who is solicitous of being numbered at once amongst your handmaidens."

Effie smilingly acknowledged the presentation, and appeared, I thought, more than half inclined to put up her bewitching little face for a kiss. But I was far too much a novice in all this sort of thing to be able to meet her advances even half way, so we only shook hands, and then, as the rest of the party were pertinaciously claiming my attention, Miss Seymour retired to her former position on the footstool, and contented herself with watching what was going on around her.

"Come now, girls," exclaimed Mrs. Errol, as a servant brought in a well-spread tea-tray, "it is time we showed our welcome in a more substantial manner than by talking this poor dear child to death. Take her to her room, Catherine, and see that all her boxes are there, and what-

ever else she may want. In the meanwhile Jenny shall make the tea, and I will go and bring in papa and Rich from their selfish gossip in the library."

I was truly thankful for this permission to escape for a few minutes from the light and heat and buzzing noise of the drawing-room, and gladly would I have laid my aching head at once on the tempting snowy pillows of my comfortable looking bed, had I not feared that my kind hostess would have sent my tea upstairs, and that the whole household would have been put to wait upon me. I hated giving trouble almost as much as I disliked being an object of universal observation, so I decided that it was better to get through this first evening as well as I could, and to make them understand by degrees that they would the most surely promote my happiness by allowing me to creep quietly into my

own nutshell, and enjoy myself in my own fashion.

Catherine, the sister who had been sent to show me my room, was the eldest of the three, about a year younger than her brother. She was rather pretty, and the gentlest and most lady-like of the whole family; not that any of them were the reverse of this, but there was something very striking in Catherine's manner and appearance, something that one would never expect to find in the daughter of a London tradesman, and which could not fail to have graced the highest and most aristocratic circles.

While I hastily changed my travel-stained dress, and bathed my still burning forehead in some cool eau-de-cologne that I found on my toilet table, Catherine Errol stood by the window, only occasionally turning round with her soft

voice and smile to know if she could be of use to me, and then resuming her patient gazing into the dull lamp-lighted square.

There was something singularly calming and composing in the extreme quietness of Catherine Errol. I discovered it on the first evening of my introduction to her, and had often and often reason to acknowledge and wonder at in our after intercourse. She had no brilliant talents, no extraordinary merit of any kind, but her grace and gentleness of character, won her the love of all, and was in itself a gift of no trivial value.

On our return to the drawing room, we found that Mr. Errol and his son had joined the group, and the latter was entering into a glowing description of Watermere and its beauties for the edification of his mother and sisters. I should have supposed Miss Seymour's also, had she not

been still sitting remote from them, and playing with a curiously ugly little dog which evidently claimed her as its mistress.

My arrival was the signal for the whole family's assembling round the tea table, and Mrs. Errol placing me between herself and her husband, who first assured me of his satisfaction at seeing me amongst them, declared that nobody was to speak a word more to me, or expect, if they did, to get an answer till I had made a good hearty meal, and was looking a little less like a ghost than I did at present.

I really did my best to comply with the wishes of my kind entertainer, but after drinking a cup of strong tea, and eating a bit of toast, my physical wants were amply satisfied; and as all the Errol family appeared to have good appetites—they had dined earlier than usual on my account—I had leisure to observe more attentively

the two younger sisters, who were seated exactly opposite to me.

Jane, the next to Catherine, was a plain, homely, but very amiable looking girl of about nineteen. She had an expression of her father and brother, but seemed more sprightly and animated than either of them. There was a whole world of sense and loving-kindness in her soft, brown eyes, and I was not surprised to notice that she was very frequently appealed to as a sort of oracle in the family circle.

Isabel, the youngest, was her mother's image, a pretty, lively brunette of seventeen, evidently fond of talking, disposed to be witty, and with a fire in her eyes, which told, I thought, of rather more temper and self-will than seemed properly to belong to a descendant of Mr. Errol. She had her brother beside her at table, and though he appeared rather disposed to evince his hap-



piness by a silent gravity, this wilful and privileged little sister compelled him to talk and even laugh with her, to the great detriment of his somewhat heavy dignity.

On the other side of the junior Richard, my beautiful, fairy Effie was seated, still nursing her ridiculous dog, who was all hair and no eyes, and feeding him with delicate atoms of chicken or biscuit.

For the benefit of those who may wonder at my calling this utter stranger "my Effie," I must explain that from the very first moment my eyes rested upon her sweet, winning face, I was conscious of an unaccountable, and altogether novel sensation of human attraction. I never attempted to solve the mystery on philosophic principles, though perhaps even this might not be impossible; but I felt it as a great reality, and one that opened to me a source of interest

and intense enjoyment, unknown and undreamt of as a personal experience till then.

When tea was over they compelled me to lie down on the sofa, and ascertaining that I was fond of music, Effie Seymour was asked to sing something to me. She complied instantly, and in doing so convinced me that the charm of a very lovely voice was added to her other attractions, but it was a grave, sacred melody she selected, and my ear was quite unaccustomed to this style of music.

"Does Miss Seymour always sing hymns?" I said in a low voice to Jane Errol, who was leaning just then against my sofa.

"Not exactly hymns, but quiet, serious songs, similar to this one," was the whispered reply. "Her father is a clergyman, and he objects very much to profane music."

"Poor Effie!" I thought, "you are to be

made a puritan then whether you like it or not. And this accounts for your being a guest in Bloomsbury square."

On leaving the piano, Effie came up to me rather timidly, but with such a winning smile on her pretty lips, and asked me if I did not play and sing myself.

"Yes," I replied, "I do both in some kind of fashion, but my voice is not sweet like yours, and I know nothing of sacred music."

"Yet it is the best—is it not?"

"That must be entirely a matter of taste. Where do you live in the country?"

"In Kent; oh, such a pretty, quiet place, with such lovely walks and drives all about. This is my first visit to London."

"And how do you like it after your country-home?"

"Not much; but I like being here, because

they are so nice, and kind, and good. You will soon learn to love them too."

"Did you know the sister they have lost?"

"Annie? Oh, yes, she was my first and dearest friend. I cannot bear to think of her, only that I am sure she is far happier now than any of us. Darling little Annie! she was almost an angel before she died."

I felt such a strange, sweet pleasure in listening to Effie's voice, and looking into the pure eyes bent down upon me, that I was sorry when Mrs. Errol interrupted our *tête-à-tête*.

"My dear," she said, addressing me, "Richard has been giving me a lecture for allowing you to sit up so long. He declares you were quite worn out before you even reached London, and under these circumstances, much as we shall regret losing your society, I believe I have no resource but to order you off to bed."

"I think I am less tired than I was, Mrs. Errol, but perhaps I had better follow your kind advice."

"By all means," said Richard senior and Richard junior in the same breath; and there was a momentary dispute between the three sisters as to which of them should have the honour of taking me to my bed room.

This time it was the sensible Jane who gained the day, and as she was a young woman of few words and rapid action, the business of undressing was speedily completed, and with a kind "Good night," I was left to the silence and solitude which an hour or two before I had so eagerly coveted.

## CHAPTER VI.

## MY EFFIE.

A VERY few days sufficed to convince me that the kindness of my reception in Mr. Errol's family, was not a spasmodic effort of courtesy, exerted on behalf of a friendless stranger, but the natural consequence of a large-hearted benevolence, which seemed to be indeed the presiding genius of the household, rendering it a home of affection and confidence, such as I had never till then had an opportunity of witnessing.

To me it was literally the commencement of a new life, not only as regarded all external objects and associations, but, what was infinitely more important, as regarded that inner and hidden existence which had hitherto depended so little for its enjoyment on human sympathies, but been content to derive its food and to fancy it was being healthily nourished, by a dreamy communing with inanimate nature, and a surrender of the heart's purest worship to this idol alone.

Now I was taken away from all my dumb and cold divinities, and placed amongst human beings, who having warm and tender feelings themselves, never spoke or acted as if they supposed me destitute of them.

It was assumed indeed, that like the most of my species and sex, I had a heart capable of love and gratitude, of joy and sorrow, and this of itself was altogether a new state of things in

my experience. If I was still outwardly reserved and undemonstrative, nobody thought of being offended thereby, or deducing the inference that nature had left me without a soul. There were those amongst the Errol family who rarely turned their hearts inside out for the public benefit, and yet these were as well beloved as the others, whose every passing feeling was written legibly on their faces.

For my own part, I gave to each member of the family, including the two Richards (though I saw very little of either of them), a warm and ever growing esteem. Of the three girls, the gentle Catherine remained my favourite, and Mrs. Errol with her constant cheerfulness, her thoughtful kindness, her unfailing sympathy, I looked upon as a perfect type of all that is lovely and loveable in woman, wife and mother.

But over and above this delightful awakening



to an appreciation of the *human* element around me, and a determination to enjoy to its fullest extent the sunshine it diffused, was another and a richer source of happiness, which, while it partook of the nature of the first had also in it a rarer and a subtler essence, that charmed and fascinated, if it did not quite intoxicate my whole being, and certainly put to flight all the self knowledge I had so long and proudly cherished.

But lest my readers should suppose that this fine flourish of trumpets is to herald the approach of a hero in a cocked hat or a clerical gown, I will at once declare that no such individual is at hand.

The quiet family in Bloomsbury square received few visitors, and amongst them I should have found it hard to choose a lover, even had I been a young lady likely to be chosen myself;

but in spite of all this I was in love after a peculiar fashion, and the object of my strong attachment was little Effie Seymour.

I do not expect that many will understand the kind of affection which I had for this innocent and beautiful child—she was always a child to me, though others recognised her claim to girlhood—for one half the world laugh at female friendships, and the other half assert that they are capable of being broken, even when they do exist, by the lightest touch of jealousy or suspicion. But I know there are a *few* who will thoroughly comprehend, and enter into the feeling or passion which I should find it difficult to describe, and to these few I would especially dedicate this episode of my life.

What first love is to a young, warm, romantic heart, that has been yearning for its initiation into this sweet mystery, or what the firstborn

child is to the fond mother who has long despaired of holding an infant treasure in her arms, that, and more if possible, my affection for Effie was to me. I had no experience to warn me against making idols, nor any religious principles to teach me that such idolatry partook of sin. I found that it brought me a happiness and a brightness in life such as I had never tasted nor seen before, and I ate as the starving eat, without a thought of anything beyond the gratification of the present moment.

It was not, after all, a subject for wonderment that I should love Effie; the whole household loved her, from her own hideous little favourite up to the senior Richard, though I felt very certain that all their affection put together would weigh as nothing against mine; and as if they divined this intuitively—I don't believe I ever showed it except to Effie herself—they soon

began to yield their claims to her society in my favour, and to leave us continually together, while the rest of the family pursued their different and appointed avocations.

For amongst the other meritorious peculiarities of the Errols was an indefatigable industry, that seemed as essential to their health and happiness as the air they breathed or the food they ate. From sunrise to sunset they were ever at work, and I used to think, during the early days of my sojourn amongst them, that from the huge baskets of clothing for the poor that were continually being finished and taken out of the house, these good people had entered into a contract to supply garments to all the paupers in London.

Now Effie Seymour, like myself, was not naturally disposed to be very industrious. Her health was delicate, and a slight degree of exer-

tion, even if it was only needlework, tired her excessively. She therefore generally preferred spending her mornings in my little quiet, shady room, where, with Pet lying at her feet, her little hands crossed on her lap, and her pretty head thrown back against a cushioned chair, she would talk to me of her country home, and make me tell her of mine, or listen with pleased and grateful attention while I read aloud to her from some of my choicest authors.

I have said that it was easy enough to account for my devotion to Effie, and so indeed it was, but a far more mysterious thing did her attachment to me appear. In everything, except it might be our tendency to indolence, we were wholly and entirely dissimilar; and what made the wonder greater was the fact that she might have chosen a bosom friend from either of the three sisters she had known so long, without the

possibility of meeting with qualities so antagonistic to her own as those she would not fail to discover in me. There lacked even the bond of sympathy in religious opinions to draw us together, for while I hesitated not to avow that I "cared for none of these things," Effie boldly professed her faith in the doctrines of the cross, and though a weak, was evidently a sincere disciple.

Amongst the Errols I soon learned that of the younger branches only Richard and Catherine were considered "decided characters" — (this was their style of speaking, and I confess that my natural taste strongly revolted against it) — but the other two girls had no disinclination for religion, and those who felt interested in their spiritual welfare hoped the time was approaching when their choice of the "good part" would also be made manifest to all around them.

But I was going to say that Effie Seymour's unmistakeable and enthusiastic attachment to me in preference to any of the others, gave me some excuse for the growing desire I felt of appropriating her whole time, thought, and society, as well as for the jealousy of which I was conscious when any member of the family proposed taking her away from me, even for the briefest period. I knew that I must lose her soon, for an indefinite time, it might be for ever, but while I *could* have her I *would*; and as it never occurred to me that Effie, with all her loveliness, was a likely girl to marry, I looked forward to a continuance of the romantic and exclusive friendship we at present entertained for each other, even though we might be separated for years.

I had been more than a fortnight in Bloomsbury Square, when one morning, as Effie and

myself sat together by the open window, vainly trying to get a breath of cool air, and wishing that we could be transplanted to country woods and fields, it suddenly occurred to me to ask my companion (I had never done so before) how it was that she first came to take a fancy to a person so little calculated to attract a young girl's regard.

Effie of course repudiated this last assertion, but as I still pressed for a more definite explanation, she said at length, with a beautiful little blush :

"Well, then, if you won't be offended, Dora, I must tell you that I pitied you so very, very much, even before you came. I knew you were alone in the world, and unhappy, and I thought I should like to be your friend."

"Dear child, how could *you* ever offend me; but, Effie, how did you come to know so much



about me. I don't remember having spoken of my loneliness or unhappiness to Mr. Errol, and indeed at the time of his visit I was scarcely conscious of being unhappy."

"No," replied Effie, and now the blush deepened on her clear skin; "it was Richard from whom I gained my information. He wrote me an account of his first interview with you at Watermere."

"Richard!—and he wrote to you about me? What does it all mean, Effie? I never heard you address Mr. Errol's son by his christian name. I was not aware that you were on those terms."

I was in truth so bewildered that I scarcely knew how I spoke, but there must have been harshness as well as astonishment in my voice, for tears sprang instantly to poor Effie's eyes, as she said:

"Oh, Dora, how sternly you speak and look at me! I'm sure I thought you knew of my engagement to Richard Errol."

"Your engagement to Richard Errol! Your engagement, did you say, Effie?"

I really and truly believed myself in a dream, and imagined that her voice would awake me.

"Yes, of course; it has been going on since the summer he spent with us in Kent, when dear Annie was alive. Papa likes Richard immensely, but he would only give his consent on the condition of our waiting till I was twenty; so you see I have yet nearly two years of spinstership to enjoy."

She spoke gaily and smilingly, though I am certain that she must have discovered that her strange announcement was far from cheering to me; but by this time I was beginning to take it

in as a fact, and to unbend my features from the gloom and harshness I could feel they had unconsciously assumed.

“But, Effie, why has all this been concealed from me? I cannot make it out. Richard scarcely ever speaks to you; you never seek to be together. And more mysterious than all the rest, you have opened your heart to me on every other subject, and never till now breathed a word of this.”

“Dearest Dora, you must give me credit for speaking the truth when I assure you I took it for granted that some of the family had mentioned the matter to you, and believing this, I naturally waited for you to open the subject. As you did not do so, I fancied that perhaps you disliked Richard; you know he is not a person to please everybody.”

I was silent, completely wrapped in my own

thoughts, and for the time unmindful of Effie's presence even.

Suddenly she sprang from her chair, came and knelt beside me, laid her head with its clustering golden curls on my knee, so that her sweet face was quite concealed, and then said in a low and agitated voice:

"Oh, Dora, I have just had a thought, an inspiration rather. You must, you shall tell me if I am right; I will never leave you till I do. Forgive me if I bring it out stupidly and abruptly; if I keep it in now, I shall not be able to say it at all. Instead of disliking Richard, as I fancied, you love him yourself, and this is the reason why my news has so surprised and pained you."

I drew up the fair, bowed head, and made the pure eyes look straight into mine. I indulged my momentary impulse to laugh at this solemn

inspiration of my darling Effie's, that she might see at once how utterly unfounded it was, and then I said seriously and sadly enough:

"No, my child; Richard Errol is less than nothing to me in the way of love, but you are all and everything I have to cling to in the wide world, and the idea so abruptly presented to me of having to give you up to a husband; nay, even now of possessing so much less of your affection than I had imagined to belong to me, has brought on a heartache, and caused me to appear harsh and unkind to you. Forgive me, Effie, and teach me to rejoice in your happiness by making it a little more manifest than you have hitherto done."

She clung to me and kissed away the tears I could not wholly restrain; assured me nothing could ever alter or diminish the friendship I had

inspired, and that Richard—how I hated the name when she pronounced it—would be as anxious as herself for its continuance when he became her husband.

“Nonsense, Effie,” I interrupted, crossly again I am afraid, “You must know that no husbands like their wives to have female friends. Once married, you are lost to me for ever; don’t try to disguise the truth from me now.”

“Dora, indeed you are mistaken, but I will read to you what Richard said about you when he wrote to me from Watermere. I know you are not interested in his opinion, but you will listen to please me. I won’t be gone a moment.”

I fancied she wanted an excuse to get away from me, and so I suffered her to go, though there were few things just then that I would

not rather have submitted to than hearing Mr. Richard Errol's love letter to Effie Seymour.

Love letter indeed! As if *he* knew anything about love!

## CHAPTER VII.

## EFFIE'S LOVER.

WHEN Effie returned with her letter there was a sweet seriousness in her face which touched me greatly, for it seemed to say, "do not be angry with me because others beside yourself have taken me into their hearts;" and in truth, however unhappy I might be, I could not long nourish one unkindly feeling towards my darling, so I smiled as amiably as I could, and drew her to an ottoman at my feet, where she might read



pursuits, and common sources of interest and happiness. Poor girl! she has evidently not yet got beyond the little tinkling streams of the desert, and even these have not made much pleasant music in her ears; her lot has been a cheerless one, unbrightened by love or friendship, or the sweet ties of kindred affection. No wonder then that she should look sad and desolate, and shrink from making a further acquaintance with a world that has given her so small a share of enjoyment. You wished me to tell you if I thought Miss Heathcott pretty. Foolish little Effie! what is mere external beauty that we should care whether those in whom we are interested possess it or not; but, to fulfil the promise you extorted, I will just say that our future guest is not what people in general call pretty, though perhaps in health and happy circumstances she may look very differently. At

consequence of this, Miss Heathcott had to admit me herself, and I was distressed to observe, even through a thick veil she wore, traces of strong agitation on her countenance as if she had been crying whole fountains of tears (this is in your style, Effie) and at the same time fighting wrathfully against the weakness. I had no need to tell her who I was, as my likeness to my father at once introduced me, and she invited me into the house with a quiet politeness that, if it expressed no particular warmth, gave me at least no idea of remarkable coldness. Her evident sadness had perhaps already prepossessed me in her favour. I thought immediately, Effie, how glad I was that she would soon have you to cheer and comfort her; you see I give you credit for some skill in these healing arts; and I tried, though I suppose in my rough and generally unsuccessful way, to lead her to speak of her tastes

quarrelling with my love for you, since he likes you so much himself."

Without noticing this, or anything I had been compelled to listen to concerning the impression I had made upon Effie's lover, I said abruptly:

"And of course, in spite of the pains you have hitherto taken to conceal it from me, you are warmly and devotedly attached to your future husband, Effie?"

"Really, Dora, I have never taken any pains to conceal it from you," she replied earnestly; "but Richard, as you must have discovered, is not of a demonstrative nature; and he has a singular prejudice against what he calls love-making in public. Under these circumstances, you cannot be surprised that I too should avoid calling attention to the fact of our engagement. Knowing his sentiments, I have even sometimes,

perhaps a little wilfully, gone beyond the line he has marked out, and manifested an indifference towards him which some might interpret into positive dislike; but he never scolds me for it, because he is too good and upright himself to suspect that I can wish in the smallest degree to tease or vex him."

"Well, Effie, I suppose it is time that I congratulated you on your future prospects. With perfect love and perfect esteem as the basis of your matrimonial felicity, it cannot fail to be perfect too."

"Oh, Dora, how is it that you still speak so bitterly, as if I had injured or offended you? You cannot guess the pain it gives me."

"My sweet child, I do not willingly give you pain," and I kissed the upturned face with my usual fondness; "but you see, Effie, I am a jealous, exacting, selfish being, and by no means

He will be the chosen friend of such a little spirit of gentleness and brightness as yourself."

"Nonsense, Dora, I won't have you talk so. Richard is delighted that we are friends."

"He hopes you may convert me. I quite appreciate his kindness and charity; but, Effie love, I had better tell you at once that I am not one of the convertible sort. There is a hardness about my nature that will not very readily give way. I am willing to acknowledge your superiority in every point of view; nay, Effie, you need not look as if you thought I spoke ironically, for I declare to you most solemnly that I feel it from my heart's lowest depths; but for all this you cannot be my master, nor I your pupil. So if your own master only lends you to me on these terms, he must recall his generosity, and we must cease to be friends."

"What a strange girl you are, Dora. I don't

understand you now in the least, but I love you with all my heart, and shall continue to do so, whether you care for my love or not. Won't you kiss me and tell me that all will remain as it was before you knew of my engagement?"

"Certainly, Effie; but you must make Richard Errol understand that neither he nor you will have any chance of making a proselyte of me. My own religion suits me better than yours would do, and I can accept no friendship that is not given without reference to a desire to narrow and confine all those thoughts and sentiments which I choose should be as free as the wandering winds of heaven. Now see how late it is, Effie; we have gossipped too long this morning. I am going to take a walk."

She did not offer to accompany me, but her wistful, loving eyes lingered about me as I hastily

put on my bonnet and mantle; and as I was passing out of the door she seized my hands, and held them for a moment, while she whispered in a gently reproachful voice :

“Dora, I am sure you will be sorry by and bye for your present coldness.”

“Let me go, my dear child,” I said brusquely.  
“All this foolish talking has given me a headache.”

She sighed, let my hands drop, and without another word returned alone into the room.

My walk was not a pleasant one.

**CHAPTER VIII.****RESTORED CONFIDENCE.**

I DO not know whether Effie spoke to Mrs. Errol or either of the girls concerning the fact of their having concealed her engagement from me, but the next morning as I sat alone, looking over the advertisement sheet of the *Times*, in the dining room, Mrs. Errol came in with her work-basket, and took the chair that stood opposite to mine by the open window.



Her first observation referred to the study in which she found me engaged, and I told her simply and frankly, that I was trying to find out somebody who wanted a governess.

"But surely, my dear," she said with even more than her usual winning kindness, "you are not thinking of leaving us yet? The girls reckon upon you for at least the entire summer, and if you are not weary of our society, why ever should you talk of running away?"

"You are all very good, Mrs. Errol," I replied, "but you see I *must* go some time, and I have an idea that it will be wiser to make the effort before the pleasant, indolent life I am now leading becomes habitual and necessary to me."

"The *must*, Dora, has reference to your own will only, for you know, without my telling you again, that we should all be glad to keep you

with us. Will you give up the governess scheme altogether, and make your home here?"

I shook my head while endeavouring to express the gratitude I truly felt, and seeing I was determined, Mrs. Errol desisted from importunity, and asked me whether Effie knew that I was in such a hurry to go.

I said I had not mentioned the subject to her lately, and then my companion added:

"She will be in despair if you leave us during her visit to London, for, although her engagement to Richard makes her regard the girls as sisters, you know, Dora, that you are the favourite *par excellence*, and indeed I happen to be in the secret of her having written to her father for his sanction to invite you to return home with her when she goes."

"A very tempting motive for deferring the prosecution of my search; but don't you think

yourself, Mrs. Errol, that if I could hear of a good situation, I ought to take it at once?"

"My dear, if you ask my opinion, and really wish me to give it cordially, I must tell you that I do not think you calculated for the work you would undertake. The life of a governess is at best a hard one, and though to some characters, the discipline might be of service,, I scarcely think it would be to you. I am very very sorry I cannot prevail on you to abandon the idea."

"Well, don't let us speak any more of it to-day, Mrs. Errol. See, I have put these advertisements aside and will do some work for you instead. Where are all the girls this morning?"

"Busy, I suppose, as usual. Effie I fancy is writing letters in her own room. Richard was saying that she looked pale at breakfast time."

"He should manage to take her for a walk or a drive every day. She wants some object to lure her out of the house."

"Yes, but Richard has no time to give up at present, even for Effie. No doubt he would like to see more of her, but she knows his strict adherence to duty too well to complain. We are all perfectly satisfied with the choice he has made, and I for one shall be glad when they are married."

"Effie looks very young and childish for a wife I think."

"But every day will add to her age, and they have yet two years before them."

"Nobody would ever suspect their attachment to see them together."

"No, Richard has rather peculiar ideas on certain subjects, and while his devotion to his future wife, has become, I am convinced, a part

of his nature, he would shrink from speaking of it even to me or his father. I have sometimes fancied that his outward coldness has been displeasing to Effie, but she ought to know, she must know, that he loves her with all the strength and depth of one of the noblest hearts that ever man possessed."

The mother spoke warmly, and with a flush of affectionate pride on her still smooth cheek. Feeling I was expected to say something, but being at a loss for an appropriate remark, I observed briefly :

"I'm sure I hope they will be happy."

Mrs. Errol now relapsed into a long fit of musing, and trying to follow her thoughts I drew a mental picture of the married life of Richard Errol and Effie Seymour. I meant it to be bright and sunny, but it grew, notwithstanding my efforts, somewhat sombre in the colouring,

and breaking off abruptly, I left my seat and told my still dreaming companion that I was going to look after Effie.

"Do so," she replied.

And the happy beaming smile that accompanied the words, convinced me that her picture, if she had drawn one, had no gloomy shadows in it to fall upon the future pathway of my sweet and gentle darling.

Effie had finished her correspondence when I went in, and was sitting at her writing table in rather a pensive attitude, with a shade of melancholy on her pretty, youthful face, that I never liked to see there.

"Come, my child," I said, gaining possession of the little hand that had been supporting her head, "you have been a great deal too industrious this morning, for such an idle puss as you generally are, and I must take you out for a

walk in the park to bring back some colour to those poor white cheeks. Will you come with me, Effie?"

"Indeed I will, Dora," she replied with suddenly awakened animation, and a smile that convinced me her sadness was connected with my recent coldness to her. "It is very kind of you to think about me."

"My child, am I not always thinking about you, most of all when I seem cross or indifferent—but make haste and get your bonnet on, it will be too warm to walk much in an hour's time."

We went to the Regent's Park, and sat down under the pleasant shade of the trees for nearly the whole morning. I was glad to be our former footing of confidential friendship with Effie, and I led her to speak of herself and of her future husband with a freedom that satisfied me I was

correct in a suspicion I had formed, but which in spite of my selfish jealousy of Effie's love, I could not in my heart rejoice at, for in truth she was very, very dear to me, and I believe her happiness would in the end have been mine also.

To-day, however, Effie was very happy indeed, as happy as the birds that made sweet music for us in the quiet nook we had chosen, and which reminded us both of our country homes far away.

She told me, on this occasion, that she had quite set her heart on having me with her for awhile during the autumn, at the romantic vicarage of which she drew such a glowing picture, that it was no wonder a lover of the country like myself should yearn for its beautiful repose, and for the dark pine groves, and the picturesque valleys, and the green



lanes, and the golden corn fields, that Effie assured me were only a few of the attractions of the home to which she invited me.

I promised her then, that if nothing unforeseen occurred to prevent it, I would at least pay her a short visit before beginning the dull career that would probably remove me far away from her and the other kind friends to whom I was so infinitely indebted.

Effie was looking so much better that evening that all the family remarked it, and asked me where I had taken her to bring back the rosy, country tints, which the close city air was beginning considerably to damage. Richard, junior, even, to my no small astonishment, unbent so far from his dignity as to thank me for taking care of his little friend; and the sisters told him laughingly that it was well for him I was a lady instead of a gentleman, or

assuredly his little friend would soon be wrested from him altogether.

Richard appeared to have no dread of me as a rival, but during the playful discussion which the saucy Isabella seemed bent on keeping up to tease her stately brother, I caught one look, just one momentary look, that Richard fixed on Effie, and it positively startled me by the depth and intensity of the feeling it revealed. It appeared to be rather a sudden and involuntary—I am sure it was involuntary—betrayal of the well tutored heart's secret, than a glance expressive of ordinary passion emitted from ordinary human eyes.

I am sure nobody remarked it but myself. As for Effie, she would not have understood it had she seen it. Her own nature was tender, loving, and clinging in no slight degree, but a passionate devotedness such as that momentary

glance expressed, would, I am convinced, have been as incomprehensible to her, particularly coming from the undemonstrative Richard Errol, as would be the wild and stormy emotions that are attributed to the children of southern climes.

I said to her that night, when she came in, as was often her custom, to undress in my room,

"Effie, I begin to think that there is much more in your future husband than appears on the surface. It will be a great trust reposed in you to constitute his happiness when you become his wife."

"Indeed I feel it so," she replied thoughtfully; and I had the fullest conviction that the dear, innocent, affectionate child would bend all the powers of her mind to the task before her, but yet I doubted, I doubted painfully, whether she would entirely succeed.

**CHAPTER IX.****A STRANGER.**

AN event at this time occurred which gave me an opportunity of judging more accurately concerning the adaptation of Richard and Effie to each other than I could have done, under ordinary circumstances, during months of careful observation.

One evening, when Mrs. Errol had been waiting dinner nearly an hour for her son, he having promised not only to be home early, but to bring

a friend with him to introduce to his family, a cab suddenly drove to the door, and dissipated some of the worst fears a portion of our wondering circle had begun to entertain, by revealing to us the absentee, afflicted with no more serious evil than a sprained ankle, which had obliged him to become for awhile the guest of the medical friend who had now kept his engagement by accompanying his patient home.

They both, but particularly Richard, made very light of the accident, and although it was evident that the pain was severe enough during dinner to deprive the sufferer of all appetite, he talked even more than usual, and seemed bent on proving to us that there was nothing the matter, and that in fact, a sprained ankle was rather calculated to raise the spirits than otherwise.

Mr. Vincent, the friend whom he had deemed

worthy of an introduction to his mother and sisters, was a young man of singularly prepossessing appearance, such a complete contrast in this respect to Richard junior himself, that I thought he must either be very vain, or endowed with extraordinary equanimity, to risk, by his own voluntary act, the chance of comparison.

But then it is true Effie was no ordinary girl, no boarding school young lady, ready to fall in love with every new face, or to receive with complacency the homage of strangers, however fascinating they might be. I was doubly convinced of this, when I noticed in the course of the evening the pretty little dignified way in which she repulsed the advances Mr. Vincent would fain have made to her. Poor young man, he was not to be blamed for this, for Effie was in truth passing fair, and of course Richard had kept up his character (an unwise one I considered

it on this occasion) by maintaining a religious silence on the subject of his engagement to Miss Seymour.

It was a very warm, oppressive night, and some of the girls after tea went out upon the balcony to get what refreshment they could from the perfume of the flowers with which we had filled it, and the few stray puffs of wind that were occasionally wafted to our side of the square.

Effie had not gone at first, but on Isabel's calling her she laid aside the work on which she had been engaged (I believe it was something for Richard), and joined the party, whose cheerful voices seemed to promise a more agreeable atmosphere without than we were enjoying within.

At this time Mr. Vincent was sitting near Richard, whose increasing suffering obliged him to lay up the injured ankle on a sofa, and made

his mother quite anxious and fidgetty about him. I was not far from them myself, and I saw that the young doctor's eloquent eyes followed Effie more yearningly than her future husband ought to have approved. I was not surprised when the former said abruptly :

"Upon my word, Errol, this heat is no joke; it's enough to put a man into a fever. Do you think I should be an intruder amongst the ladies if I stepped out on the balcony for a few minutes."

"Not at all," said his unconscious friend, "go at once, my good fellow. Those who are condemned to London in the dog days, may well indulge in any alleviation their circumstances will admit. My sisters have some boxes of mignonette out there which at least you will find refreshing."

Mr. Vincent waited for no second permission,



and after he was gone, Richard senior, who had only come home since dinner, occupied for a few minutes the vacant seat their guest had left. I heard him tell his son that he would not be able to stir out of the house for several days, but Richard junior, having had no previous experience in sprained ankles, only shook his head, and replied confidently—

“We shall see, sir.”

I think they spoke then of Mr. Vincent, for I heard Richard the younger observe of somebody that he was a young man of the highest and soundest principle, one who had been proof against all the temptations which beset medical students on their first coming to London, and in short he promised to be one of the brightest ornaments of the profession he had chosen.

From all this I gathered that Mr. Vincent held the same religious opinions as my friends in

Bloomsbury Square, and I could not help thinking it a pity that he should be allowed to fall in love with the bewitching little Effie, without a word of warning.

Not that I intended, dear reader, to interfere in the matter. My disposition was certainly not a meddling one, and had it not been for the extraordinary interest with which Effie herself inspired me, I should probably never have troubled myself an atom, though all London had been fighting about her.

I had put the last stitch in a collar I was embroidering for Mrs. Errol, whose birthday we were all anticipating, and was leisurely contemplating my work with some satisfaction, when the not very musical voice of the gentleman with the sprained ankle abruptly roused me from my pleasing employment.

“How is it, Miss Heathcott, that you are

not overpowered by our stifling atmosphere. I should have expected that you would feel it more than any of us after the purity of your own mountain air?"

"I do not feel it," I replied, "but the relief to be obtained by sitting on the balcony, I find is rather tantalizing than otherwise. Every breath of air serves only to make me more sensible of the closeness that follows it; and besides I have been very busy this evening."

"By the bye," he continued as out of common civility I moved my chair a few inches nearer to his sofa, "I hope the flowers you were good enough to bring so carefully all the way from the north, were duly appreciated here."

I smiled involuntarily as the thought flashed across me that after five weeks from the time to which he alluded, it was rather late to make this enquiry.

With a quickness, for which I should certainly never have given him credit, Richard seemed to divine the meaning of my smile.

“You are thinking, Miss Heathcott, that I have hitherto manifested very little interest in the subject, but I did not forget it, nevertheless, for those flowers are always associated in my mind with the remembrance of a pale but steadfast face continually bent over them, and eyes that looked as if they disdained to shed the tears that would have been such an unspeakable relief.”

Not choosing to betray the surprise this bit of sentiment from the stolid Richard occasioned me, nor to have my own past emotions made a matter of conversation, I only said, as, indeed, I was bound to do:

“I was unaware then that I was coming to a home that would be so much happier than the

one I had hitherto known, with all its external beauties; but in the meanwhile, how does your ankle feel?"

He smiled at my abruptness, and confessed *sotto voce* (that his mother, who had just entered the room, might not hear), that the pain was rather increasing.

"Let Mr. Vincent come in and look at it now," I said, "and I will go to your sisters."

"Oh, no, he likes to be there best; he could do nothing more for me to-night."

"Your friend has a fine face."

"He is a noble fellow altogether, Miss Heathcott. I hope now he has come to settle in London that we shall see a great deal of him."

"Has he a mother and sisters?"

"A mother only, with whom he is a perfect idol. She is a ladylike woman, but never goes into society."

At this moment, Effie, with a brighter tint on her cheek than when she went out, came in alone, and took the chair between mine and Richard's.

In answer to her affectionate enquiries he made the best of the pain he was enduring, and then ensued a little dialogue on the subject of Mr. Vincent. Richard wanted to know how she liked him, and Effie declared that she had not had time to form an opinion. His good looks were undeniable, but for the rest she could say nothing, except that as Richard's friend his worth must be taken for granted.

I thought this very nice and pretty of my darling Effie, and was not surprised to see the glow that overspread her lover's cheek at these honied words; but I was sorry that he strove to hide his satisfaction, and to exaggerate that outward calmness, which, as far as Effie was con-

cerned, I knew to be a most deceitful mask, and one that he was unwise in wearing.

Before Mr. Vincent and the other girls came in Effie, had quitted her seat, and was holding some knitting cotton for Mrs. Errol.

The necessity for applying leeches to the injured ankle, and getting the stoical sufferer to bed, afforded an excuse for shortening the evening.

"I shall look in to-morrow," said the young doctor as he grasped his friend's hand at parting.

And even before Richard could finish the expression of his pleasure in the anticipation of this promised visit, I saw that the eyes of the other had wandered instinctively to the side of the room where Effie was completing her task, and somehow my heart misgave me.

## CHAPTER X.

## CATHERINE.

THE elder Richard proved the truest prophet on this occasion, and having visited his son's room early in the morning, he informed us at breakfast that the patient himself acknowledged that the sacred precincts of the Temple would have to bear his absence for at least three or four days.

"At any rate *we* shall be the gainers, shan't



we, Eff?" said Isabel, turning to my silent neighbour; "and if you and I cannot make up to poor Rich for the pain of his lame foot, I shall put no more faith in woman's boasted powers."

"We will at least do our best," replied Effie, with her sunny smile; "but I doubt if we shall find Richard at all disposed to depend upon our consolations."

"He may not acknowledge it," put in the gentle Catherine, whose extreme quietness made her a shrewd observer; "but rest assured, Effie, no man is insensible to the attention of a woman he is attached to."

"Right, quite right, little Katie," said the father, with a smiling nod at his eldest daughter; "though where you learnt that small piece of wisdom I cannot even guess."

Catherine's pale cheek took just sufficient

colour to show how very pretty a blush would make it, but she only replied :

“I think, papa, some knowledge comes to us intuitively. At any rate, I have no better explanation to give.”

Mrs. Errol and her second daughter, the ever active and useful Jane, had swallowed their breakfasts in a few minutes, and betaken themselves to the room of the invalid. As soon as the father had said good morning to us all, and departed to his city avocations, Isabel and Effie went together to the drawing-room to arrange the sofa for Richard against his coming down, to put fresh flowers in the vases, and to select such books as they thought he might like them to read to him.

For my own part, I was retiring as usual to the solitude I still occasionally loved, when Catherine, taking my arm, said abruptly :

"Dora, suppose you and I have a short stroll together round the gardens. It is cool and pleasant after the rain, and I have a stupid headache this morning."

I acceded instantly, rather wondering though at the proposal, as Catherine rarely left the house till all her morning duties were completed.

We had made the tour of the square gardens about twice, speaking casually of the freshness of the air, and the improved aspect of the turf, when suddenly my companion stopped, and looking at me earnestly, said in a low, grave voice:

"Dora, I want you to tell me candidly, you, who I think understand dear Effie better than any of us, whether you really believe she loves my brother as she ought to love the man she is to marry?"

I was so startled by the question, that for a minute or so I was literally unable to reply. It took another minute to shape this reply, with a due respect both to truth and caution, but at last I said:

"My firm opinion is that she knows very little of her own heart at present. Richard, or any man with good and kindly feelings, might win it wholly, for Effie has one of the most grateful and clinging natures I ever knew; but your brother scarcely understands this peculiar nature, and although I am sure that she likes him better than any other man, and is quite content to regard him as her future husband, still I must confess that I do not give her credit for loving him as she might love if he took more pains to reach the inner citadel of her affections."

"The truth is," said Catherine, "poor Richard

is so entirely absorbed in his own great love for Effie—you may not think this, but I know it—that it never occurs to him to reflect upon the means of winning or retaining her love for him. And then his character is so essentially honest and upright, that Effie having once acknowledged an attachment, which I suppose she has, he would as soon dream of questioning the rising of the sun, as of doubting the depth or sincerity of this attachment.”

“I do not for a moment doubt its sincerity myself. Effie is utterly incapable of feigning.”

“I know it, but you doubt its earnestness and depth, and so do I, and in married life these deficiencies must be discovered, and felt. I am uneasy when I think of it all.”

“Do the rest of the family share your anxieties?”

“Not in the least. Dear mamma is always

hopeful on all subjects; Jane is too practical to give it a thought; and Bella is not much of an observing or thinking character; then as for my father, he entertains so exalted an opinion of Richard, and is so little at home, that it is not likely any suspicion would ever cross his mind; besides, Dora, I don't think men in general attach so much importance to actual love as we do. They presume it is sure to come after marriage if it does not before."

"I daresay you are right; but now let me ask *you* a question. Admitting our surmises to be correct, which do you think would be the greatest sufferer after marriage, on discovering the true state of the case?"

"That would depend much on the circumstances and causes of the discovery, but I fear it would be little less than death or insanity to poor Richard to find out that he had married

a woman whose heart was not entirely his own."

"But perhaps after marriage your brother's apparent reserve and even coldness, may be exchanged for that outward warmth and tenderness, which would be certain to win Effie's whole heart and soul."

"This is my greatest hope, but it is not a strong one, for there are some persons—women I daresay, as well as men—who are utterly incapable of giving expression to their deepest feelings, and unless they happen to meet with those whose own hearts have at least one sympathetic chord, they must ever remain misunderstood and unappreciated."

I felt strongly the truth of this remark, but I said only:

"After all, what can we do in the matter except to lament that things have not a brighter

aspect. Your brother would scarcely endure to be tutored as to his conduct towards Effie."

"Oh, not for worlds would I attempt it—besides, think for a moment what he would suffer on the bare suggestion of Effie not loving him so entirely as she might do."

"Then we can only wait and hope, Catherine. Perhaps indeed our interest in the happiness of those concerned may have caused us to exaggerate the evil."

Catherine evidently did not think so. She said after a few minutes of thoughtful silence:

"I always tremble when I see one human being so much wrapt up in another; there *must* come disappointment or suffering in some way. I have fancied at times that Richard, feeling conscious of the intensity of his love, may have shrouded himself in this mantle of outward coldness with a view of cheating his own heart, and



persuading it that it is not in reality transgressing the commandment."

"What commandment?"

"In his case, it is very shortly and simply expressed. 'Little children, keep yourselves from idols.'"

Having no wish to be drawn into a religious discussion—I had forgotten till this moment that Catherine was one of the "Professors"—I gave utterance to a thought which had crossed my mind once or twice since we had been talking.

"Your apparent facility in reading hearts, Catherine, would almost betoken some peculiar personal experience, which, if indeed you possess it, gives you an immense advantage over me in this respect, as I have never had, or inspired the shadow of an attachment in my whole life."

Whether this spontaneous confession awoke a responsive confidence, or whether my gentle companion would in any case have gratified my unwarrantable curiosity I cannot say, but she answered with a quietness which was equally touching and suggestive.

“Dora, if you care to know it, I *have* had some personal experience in these things—nothing worth detailing however—a short bright summer’s dream ending in disappointment, and, for the time, bitter and agonizing regret. Now I can be thankful for it all, for it has cured me of earthly dreaming for ever, and I am as you see, quite happy and content.”

I pressed the soft hand that was resting on my arm, but ventured no other token of sympathy. Catherine understood me, and we walked on for some minutes in unbroken silence. Then she said with recovered cheerfulness—

"I think, Dora, we must go in now. My work will be waiting for me, and this unwonted idleness may excite suspicion. I suppose you will join the party who are to be in attendance on the invalid in the drawing-room."

"Perhaps I may some time during the morning. I want to see how Effie acts the part of nurse."

**CHAPTER XI.****THE ADVANTAGES OF A SPRAINED ANCLE. .**

VERY sweetly and tenderly she did it, and with such a modest, womanly grace, that I marvelled not at the look of proud satisfaction that in spite of all his efforts to hide it under the ordinary mask, peeped out of Richard Errol's eyes and gave a more than common softness to the lines about his well cut mouth. He could not help thinking a sprained ancle a delightful thing, since it procured him the happiness of being

waited on and ministered to by the little white caressing hands, whose every touch he prized—grave, cold man though he seemed—more than a miser prizes his darling gold.

Ah, Richard Errol, I read you correctly even in those early days, and I pitied you that with such deep and passionate feelings, you understood so little the art of winning their return. I knew you even then to be worthy of a woman's love, but I doubted whether you would ever obtain in its full and perfect measure, that which was your due.

When I joined the drawing-room coterie that day, Effie was reading aloud to the invalid, Isabel was working for him, and both were seated on footstools by his couch, while from time to time Mrs. Errol's loving face peeped in at the door to see if nothing was wanted, and perhaps to rejoice in witnessing the contentment, in the

midst of physical suffering, of her well beloved son.

Mr. Vincent had called the first thing in the morning, pronounced the ankle to be progressing favourably, but decided that it would be necessary for him to look in again in the afternoon.

The reading continued for about a quarter of an hour from the time of my entrance, and then Isabel, suddenly snatching the book from Effie's hands, declared they would have no more of such dry stuff, and that she knew Dora would like talking a great deal better.

"Nay," I said, with perfect sincerity, "if your brother is interested in the book, I am more than satisfied to be included amongst the listeners. I don't think I am such an inveterate chatterer, Isabel."

"Oh, no, you are one of the Minerva tribe, I

confess; but still I vote so much dry reading a bore, and if Effie would tell the truth, instead of making such superhuman efforts to conceal her yawns, she would be on my side of the question."

"I hope, Effie," said Richard, looking at her anxiously, "that if you felt tired you would not conceal it from me. I can read to myself either now or at some other time."

"Well then," replied Effie, really glad of an excuse for a little rest, "we will put aside the book for awhile, and oblige Isabel by talking. Now, Dora, you are the last comer, so you must begin."

"Even if I have nothing to say?"

"Oh, but clever people always have something to say, and we know you are clever."

"But clever people, Effie, do not always feel inclined for gossiping conversation," said Richard,

who had, I may here remark, a peculiar dislike to what is generally called "small talk." "I have no doubt Miss Heathcott agrees with me that being desired to converse is the surest method of keeping the lips sealed. You all know the anecdote about Theodore Hook and the city tradesman."

"Oh, spare us, I beseech you!" cried the mischievous Isabel, laying her hand upon her brother's lips, "we all know it so well that we could repeat it backwards. Dora, my dear, don't let this cynical gentleman prevent you from being amusing to the company if you are so disposed. Effie wants something to brighten her up after all that heavy reading, and for my own part I am thinking seriously of taking up Richard in my arms, and running round the room with him, by way of a change."



"Giddy goose," said the never giddy brother, "when will you leave off being a child?"

"When I begin to feel the wings of womanhood growing out of my back, I suppose," was the saucy reply, "but at present there is no appearance of any such calamity. By the bye, how do yours get on, Effie?"

And with a look of mock gravity she commenced rubbing the shoulders of my little friend and shaking her head pityingly at Richard, as she declared that no excrescences were yet perceptible.

"Pray don't, Bella, you will make Effie as trifling as yourself," he said, for in truth, my poor Effie was laughing heartily, and seeming to enjoy for once the ruffling of her stately lover's dignity.

This rebuke, however, quenched her gaiety in a moment, and twisting herself out of Isabel's

grasp, she fetched some work from the table, and began to be very industrious.

"Oh, you are all so dull and stupid," exclaimed the former, jumping up from her seat, "that I shall leave you to yourselves for some time. When I am gone, Richard will be able to deliver a homily to you two dear girls, and I have no doubt it will do you both a vast deal of good. *Au revoir.*"

"Now would you like me to go on reading?" asked Effie in her sweetest and gentlest voice, as soon as the door had closed on Isabel. "I am sure Dora will not mind."

"Thank you, Effie," he replied gratefully, "but you look tired, and I will not tax your patience any longer this morning. I think you had better get a little walk, if Miss Heathcott or one of my sisters can go with you."

"It is too warm," said Effie, "and besides,"

she added in a lower voice, "I can walk any day, and we do not have you at home always."

This little speech was so well timed, and uttered, I thought, with such affectionate regard to Richard's late vexation, that I wondered he did not at least seize her hand and press it to his lips.

Had it been me, I should not indeed have required that sort of demonstration, for I was accustomed to look below the surface; but with Effie it was altogether different—and he who loved her with such fond devotion, ought to have discovered the natural yearnings of that tender simple heart.

He only said in his provokingly calm manner:

"Thank you, Effie."

And how was she to guess that the heart beneath that cold exterior was thrilling with delight

at the very thought that his presence could bring to her one gleam of satisfaction.

He talked, however, cheerfully and agreeably after this, and the morning went by rapidly. To make it pleasanter for the invalid, Mrs. Errol had the luncheon brought into the drawing room, and he told his mother that if there was such a general conspiracy to spoil him, for nothing more serious than a lame foot, he should be tempted to come home with a broken arm one of these days.

"I am at least glad," said Isabel, who was always ready for a skirmish, "that my lord acknowledges his obligations to us. Depend upon it we shall be looking out for adequate returns when the foot is well—we don't work for nothing, do we, Effie?"

Effie was evidently afraid of vexing him

again, so she only smiled at Isabel's nonsense this time, and went on eating her luncheon.

I was not present when Mr. Vincent called in the afternoon, but Catherine told me, when we happened to meet a few minutes before dinner, that he had spent at least an hour with them, and that he was certainly a very superior young man.

"And how many of you were in the room during his visit?" I asked.

"Only Effie and myself, besides Richard," was the answer; "and Effie wanted to make her escape as soon as he came in, only Richard begged her to stay."

"How did your brother address her in Mr. Vincent's presence?"

"Oh, as Miss Seymour, of course; you know his peculiarities on this point."

"I think, however, he ought to mention his

engagement, if his friend is to be a frequent visitor."

"So do I, for Effie is very attractive, and Mr. Vincent is continually looking at her. I think I will give mama a hint."

"It would be but fair. Did Effie talk much while he was here to-day?"

"Not a bit. She placed herself in a dark corner, and seemed to be seized with an alarming fit of industry. Richard said, when he was gone, that he was afraid she did not like his friend."

"And what did Effie reply?"

"I really forget now; but I know that it elicited quite an enthusiastic speech from Richard on the subject of Mr. Vincent's merits. My brother is certainly a most generous-hearted, unselfish being. Effie ought to appreciate him."

"And Effie," I answered, "is a dear, pure-minded, affectionate, conscientious girl, and she does her best to understand and enter into Richard's moods and feelings."

"I believe it," said Catherine earnestly; "but her soft eyes were not made to look down into the depths which have been stirred by her many attractions. She must see the ripple on the surface to believe that there is agitation beneath."

I said nothing more, but I thought that as long as Effie was watching and waiting for this surface rippling, there would not be much danger for her, even if during all her courtship she waited and watched in vain.

Catherine might be right in the direction which she gave her fears; but mine, I acknowledge, were beginning to take a rather different turn.

## CHAPTER XII.

## A PROPOSED EXCURSION.

FOR more than a fortnight Richard was a close prisoner, but if he felt the confinement irksome it was certainly not owing to any lack of attention or society. We were all willing to devote ourselves, according to our respective capabilities, to his service, and the weather being at this time excessively warm, there was no great sacrifice in spending our mornings or afternoons in the large shady drawing-room, which, between



us, we took care to have always well supplied with fresh and fragrant flowers.

Richard generally preferred reading to conversation, and therefore we used each of us to have our turn in reading aloud from some book of his own selection, while the others worked, or drew, or remained idle (I believe, though, it was only Effie and myself who ever did this) as they felt disposed.

But sometimes we were all seized with a talking fit, and then Richard had no choice but to join in it, and to let us get a few more glimpses into his carefully padlocked mind than we were usually favoured with.

If the heart had opened too, it might have been for good; but the mind, even without the heart, was well worth looking into.

Scarcely a day passed without a long visit from the young surgeon, and we were growing

to regard him almost as one of the family. Catherine had spoken to her mother about the expediency of letting him know of Effie's engagement, but Mrs. Errol only laughed, and said there was no danger, as he himself was engaged to a young lady residing with Mrs. Vincent.

Under these circumstances, which I did not forget to mention to Effie, I thought there could be no need for any further anxiety, and like the rest of the family, I suffered myself to be captivated by Mr. Vincent's really charming and attractive manners, and enjoyed his society as much as any of them.

It was altogether a very pleasant season, and I felt sorry when Richard began to speak of returning to his usual avocations. I knew that our social mornings, our readings, and our conversations would then be done away with, and perhaps I was peculiarly sensitive to the charm

of such a life from never having until now enjoyed anything of a similar description.

In my own keen appreciation of its pleasure, I had been less vigilant than usual in noting how Effie got on with Richard, but I know that the general impression on my mind remained the same as before—that they were not entirely suited for each other, and that although he loved her with an intensity amounting to idolatry, and she did everything that her tender, affectionate nature, as well as her high sense of duty could suggest to please him, there still existed a gulf between them that was not the less impassable because neither of them had as yet discerned it.

One day, when Effie and I were alone together, she asked me suddenly what I thought of Richard, now that I had had an opportunity of seeing more of him.

"There is much to admire and like in him," I replied cordially; "and he certainly improves greatly upon acquaintance."

"Don't you conscientiously think he is too good for me, Dora?"

"In what way, my child?"

"Well, I mean he is too wise, too clever, too superior in all respects for such a poor, weak little atom as myself."

"The weak require the strong to uphold and take care of them, Effie."

"Yes, that is very true; but somehow I cannot help feeling, the more I see and know of Richard, that there is a kind of condescension in his loving me, which—which makes me at times feel uncomfortable and almost unhappy."

"But you are quite sure that he *does* love you, Effie?"

"Oh, yes, in his grand, protecting, wise, and reasonable way, more even than I deserve."

"Oh, Effie, he loves you with his whole heart and soul, passionately, devotedly! and it is only that outward crust of reserve and calmness that forbids you seeing it."

She laughed first, I suppose at my sudden and unusual enthusiasm, and then a shadow flitted across the sweet, expressive face that I could not at once understand.

"You do not believe what I have said, Effie?"

"I don't know; don't ask me any more about it now, Dora. I have perhaps done wrong in talking at all of these things."

The tears were in her eyes, though she sought to hide them, and I would not for the world have pained her by continuing the subject.

We were sitting with Richard the next morn-

ing, and watching or assisting him as he tried his ankle in moving slowly about the room, while he spoke confidently of being able to get out the beginning of the following week, when Isabel, with a beaming face, suddenly presented herself at the door.

"I am not coming in, good people," she began in her laughing way, "because in the first place I am a great deal too busy, helping mamma to make the jam (you ought all of you to have offered your services in picking the fruit I think) and in the next place I am sure I am not wanted. But I am here for the purpose of telling you some delightful news. If you put on that grave face, Rich, I will keep it to myself. What is there to look grave about?"

"A great deal, my little sister, if you only knew it," replied her brother, smiling, however, athwart the gravity she had found fault

with. "And now for your startling intelligence."

"I never said it was startling, did I? Nothing would ever startle such a piece of granite as you. But I address myself to these young ladies, who are blessed, I presume, with human hearts and feelings. Dora and Effie, I hope you will be glad to hear that Monday, being mamma's birthday, it is proposed that we shall all be conveyed to some romantic spot in the country, for the purpose of spending the day in rustic fashion, and making ourselves supremely ridiculous by sentimentalizing amongst the woods and fields."

"A family pic-nic," said Effie, looking delighted; "how nice it will be."

"Yes, my dear," continued Isabel, "such is the prevailing opinion at this moment in the kitchen, where mamma and Jenny are burning their faces over an immense caldron, and Cathe-

rine is staining her lily fingers with the juice of divers kinds of fruit. I hope, Dora, you have not grown too much of a London lady to like pic-nics."

I replied that I had never been to a regular pic-nic, but that a day in the country would be always delightful to me.

"And his lordship on the sofa; may we hope that our little project meets his stately approbation?"

"Does my mother expect me to be of the party, Isabel?"

"What a question for a being supposed to be endowed with extra rationality! Why is it not to celebrate your recovery that it has been thought of, ungrateful men?"

"I thought you said it was to celebrate our mother's birthday."

"And cannot one undertaking have two ob-



jects of equal magnitude? You are dull this morning, my lord; but I am wasting time, and forgetting the chief part of my mission. Mamma wishes to know whether Mr. Vincent is to be invited or not; you are to do exactly as you like about it."

"I should like him to be asked, certainly, but his coming is very doubtful."

"Then your answer is, yes."

She was gone before Richard could speak again, and while he was still looking intently and thoughtfully at the closed door, and I was trying to follow his thoughts, Effie was laughing merrily, and telling her ugly little dog that they were going to have such fun on Monday.

Contrary to Richard's expectations—how slow men are to understand each other—Mr. Vincent said he should manage to get a holiday to join our pic-nic. And all the family were pleased.

**CHAPTER XIII.****IN THE LEAFY WOODS.**

**AFTER** a lengthened disoussion concerning the comparative merits of Richmond, Hampton Court, Norwood, and various other localities, it was at length decided that our pic-nic should take place at a retired but extremely pretty village not far from Croydon. Mr. Errol had an old acquaintance living there whom he was anxious to see, and his holidays being few and far between, he thought the present would be an

excellent opportunity for paying a long promised visit, and introducing the younger branches of his family to his friend.

As the distance was considerable, we were to start quite early in the morning, distributed in two large open carriages, the first of which was to contain Mr. and Mrs. Errol and their two eldest girls, and the second Richard, Effie, Isabel, and myself. Mr. Vincent having his own horse, refused to incommode either party, although assured by both that room could easily be made for him.

The morning of the eventful day rose as fairly and brightly as we could have desired. By seven o'clock the sun was shining in merrily at our windows, and before eight we were all dressed and assembled in the breakfast-room waiting for dear Mrs. Errol's appearance, to present to her the birthday offerings we had prepared.

She came in at last, walking by her grave husband's side, and smiling with almost girlish delight behind an enormous bouquet of the choicest flowers, which he had just placed in her hands. The girls all ran up and hugged her in their arms, to the great detriment of the pretty collar and cuffs in which she had adorned herself; and then their little presents were showered upon her, and the mother's eyes overflowed with tears as she kissed and thanked the givers, and called them her dear, loving girls, and said that each pretty gift was the thing of all others she most wanted.

I don't know how it was that at that moment I was more attracted to the silent father, who stood apart, though gazing on the scene, but I believe some strange instinct (it could hardly have been a sympathetic one) revealed to me that his thoughts on this bright birthday morn-

ing were lingering yearningly round the deserted grave of his poor lost darling at Florence.

But it came at last to be my turn to utter a few words of affectionate congratulation to the heroine of the day, and the earnest kindness with which she responded to them, so filled my heart for the time, that I ceased to follow the spirit wanderings of the elder Richard, and when my thoughts came back from my selfish contentment, the younger Richard had joined our circle, and his father was asking him, as he often did, to lead the morning worship of the family.

The breakfast on this occasion was very speedily dispatched, for although everybody was exhorted to make a substantial one, nobody gave heed to the advice. Mrs. Errol and her girls had still, they said, so much to do in attending

to the packing of our provisions, that they vanished after swallowing about half a cup of coffee each; the father and son soon followed to read their letters and papers till the carriages should be announced, and it so happened that only Effie and myself, who had nothing but our bonnets to put on, were in the breakfast-room when Mr. Vincent arrived.

I had just been telling Effie that she was looking very pale, and that I should make her have a good scamper on the hills when once we got into the country. The paleness, however, vanished as our guest entered the room, and, apparently unmindful of any other presence, advanced to greet her with a look of eager pleasure it was impossible to mistake.

(I wondered how the young lady residing with Mrs. Vincent would like it.)

"Here is Miss Heathcott," said Effie, at

length, in an ill-assured voice, as she disengaged the hand he had been holding such an unreasonable time, while making the most anxious enquiries concerning her health. "Dora," (in quite a vexed tone to me, as if *I* could help his want of politeness) "you always *will* get in the back-ground."

"I really beg Miss Heathcott's pardon," said the gentleman, in his winning accents, turning, reluctantly enough I am sure, towards me, "but she is too true a friend of yours to resent my momentary forgetfulness of herself. I hope (offering me his hand) that you are as much prepared as the rest of us to enjoy this lovely day."

"It is indeed very lovely," I said absently. "I have no doubt we shall all enjoy it."

He evidently considered he had now done his duty by me, and was turning to resume at least

his contemplation of my fair companion, when, to his disappointment, he perceived that she was no longer in the room.

"Miss Seymour is gone for our bonnets," I explained, sitting down by the window and beginning to think harder thoughts of religious people than I had done since my residence amongst the Errols, "won't you take a chair, Mr. Vincent?"

He took one instantly, and entered with his usual grace and facility into a cheerful conversation with me, but his eyes were ever wandering towards the door, which I pretty well guessed would not open again till all the party came in together.

Effie justified my expectations concerning her, but it made my heart sink to observe the exceeding pallor of her countenance, as I took my seat opposite to her in the carriage, and endea-



voured by the most lively and nonsensical remarks I could think of, to rouse her into animation before any of the others should have an opportunity of discovering that she was less cheerful than usual.

Richard, however, soon found out that she was looking pale, and after regarding her anxiously for a few minutes, he said :

“ Effie, we shall have to send you home before your time, if your cheeks do not get a brighter hue than they have at present.”

For a second or two they became even brighter than he could have desired, and I fancied there was a trembling eagerness in her voice as she replied :

“ I really believe I want country air again ; and papa must be lonely without me for so long.”

“ Then you wish to leave us, Effie ?”

There was no suspicion, not the faintest breath of it, in his voice, and yet I thought if I had been Effie the words would have affected me mightily. She only, however, coloured a little more, and said almost in a whisper :

“ I think perhaps I ought to go soon.”

During this time Mr. Vincent had been riding on the other side of the carriage, and talking to the rattling Isabel, so that I knew he had heard nothing of what had passed. I was sure too that she would contrive to monopolize him as long as possible, and if I could only rouse and interest Effie, I felt convinced that the drive for all our party would be a pleasant one.

The pure fresh air of the country and the charming scenery into which we were soon transported, accomplished this without much assistance from me, and although Effie talked less than

Richard or myself, she listened to all we said with evident pleasure, and not unfrequently joined in with her joyous, girlish laugh, which had invariably the effect of bestowing upon poor Isabel, for some minutes at least, a most inattentive companion.

But politeness demanded that Mr. Vincent should occasionally favour the foremost party with his attendance, and whenever he rode on I noticed that Effie became unconsciously more natural, if not more cheerful, while Isabel clearly showed that to her the great interest of the drive was suspended.

Whether her feelings went deeper than the gratification of talking freely with a young man whom all acknowledged to be superlatively fascinating, I could not as yet determine; but I thought in my ignorance, that the knowledge of his engagement ought to have preserved all these

,

carefully and seriously educated girls from falling in love with him.

It was nearly the middle of the day when we arrived at our destination, and for the last two hours of our drive the heat had been intense. We were all, however, vulgarly hungry, which, considering that we had eaten no breakfast, was not remarkable, and it was unanimously agreed that as soon as we could come upon a quiet, shady spot, the dinner should be spread, and the business of the day commenced in earnest.

Where nature on all sides had been so prodigal of its beauties, it was not difficult to find a dining room to our taste, and we chose a lovely glade at the entrance of a little wood, where we should be protected not only from the scorching rays of the sun, but screened from the observation of any accidental passers by.

To me the delight of being once more in the

country, amongst my old deities, was so supreme, that for awhile I revelled in the exquisite luxury of sight and sound, to the total oblivion of everything besides.

I should have liked to have taken a piece of bread as my portion of the feast, and to have wandered away from them all, even from Effie, that I might have abandoned myself to the feelings with which I felt sure not one amongst them could entirely sympathise.

But this of course was out of the question; and very soon in the merriment of my companions, and in the more material enjoyment of the good things which Mrs. Errol had provided, my gregarious propensities returned in full force, and I was content to derive from this, my first pic-nic, its common-place and orthodox pleasure.

I had never seen either of the two Richards

to such advantage as they appeared to-day. Their stateliness and heaviness appeared all gone, and they were as full of fun, as frolicsome, and as ridiculous as children let out from school for a holiday. Dear Mrs. Errol, too, was like a bird, and when, in compliance with a general petition, her sweet voice rang through the leafy wood in one of the quaint old ballads of her youth, and her children gathering closer round her, gazed through dimmed but loving eyes, into her gentle, comely face, I felt the fascination of the scene and hour complete, and wished it could last for ever.

Nor was I alone in my admiration of this rare and perfectly united family. I saw that Mr. Vincent was deeply touched and interested, and that his usual gaiety was shadowed by some deeper feeling that made him anxious to take the part of a spectator rather than an actor in

the scene. As for Effie, she still looked pale and occasionally abstracted, but her voice was not missing in the general hilarity, and I believe her naturally buoyant spirits enabled her to throw off for the time being, whatever sadness had been oppressing her before.

We had hoped as the afternoon advanced that the heat would have moderated, but the reverse proved to be the case, and about four o'clock Mr. Errol proposed going, with as many of his children as chose to accompany him, to call upon his friend, and leaving the rest of us to sleep, or chat, or dream under the trees till they returned.

He thought it probable that the whole party would have an invitation to tea from his old acquaintance, and as his house and grounds were worth seeing, we had no objection to amuse ourselves by anticipating such a finale to our day's pleasure.

Mrs. Errol and her two eldest girls decided on accompanying the father, Richard pleaded his weak ankle as an excuse for keeping his reclining posture under the trees. Mr. Vincent was already settled with a book and a cigar by his side; Isabel, throwing a veil over her face declared she must go to sleep, and Effie and myself (having descried some nobler looking woods in the distance), agreed that we should endeavour, in spite of the heat, to reach them, and after a short ramble be back in time to avail ourselves of the expected invitation to tea.



## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE THUNDER STORM.

WE scarcely spoke while on our way to the woods (which proved to be further than we had reckoned on), for the sultriness of the atmosphere seemed every moment to be increasing, and was becoming indeed almost insupportable. But once beneath the welcome shadow of the thick dark foliage, we threw ourselves down on the mossy roots of a magnificent oak, and said how nice it

was to have escaped the glaring sunshine, and to be able to rest in such a sylvan bower.

"I think we shall have a thunder storm, Effie," I remarked, as a few ominous looking clouds began to gather in the distance. "Are you afraid of thunder?"

"No; at least not generally; but it would not be pleasant to be overtaken by a storm in this wood. They say it is dangerous to be under trees during the lightning, and yet I feel quite incapable while this heat lasts, of walking back."

"Oh, I don't think it will come for some hours. Anyhow, I hope not, for as soon as we are a little rested I should like to get further into the wood. It looks so deliciously cool and tempting along those narrow paths."

"We have many such woods as these and deeper I expect than this is, around my home,

Dora. I do so long to have you there with me."

"Yet surely, Effie, you will regret leaving all your kind friends, and one in particular, in Bloomsbury Square."

"Of course I shall; but I have been such an immense time away from home now, and really I don't think London agrees with me."

She spoke rather rapidly, and as if any other subject would have pleased her as well, but I was merciless, and so I said again—

"I suppose Richard comes down to see you pretty often when you are in Kent."

"No; not often. He cannot get away; that is to say he is studying hard and does not wish it."

"He will soon be called to the bar I should think?"

"I dare-say he will."

"There is no fear of his not becoming eminent, for he unites perseverance with talent, and this is rather an uncommon union."

"Yes."

I saw that the answers were growing briefer every time, and turning suddenly to look at my companion, I was shocked and startled to observe the deep depression exhibited in her countenance.

"Effie, my child," I exclaimed impulsively, "what ails you? If you reckon me your friend, let me share your sorrow."

Her crimsoning face was bent down upon her knees for a moment, and I heard a smothered sob.

"Effie, you foolish little thing, look up and let me comfort you. On such a day we must have no tears or sadness."

She did look up, and even tortured her poor

pale lips into a smile, but the voice alone would have been a sufficient interpreter had I needed one.

She said, "Dora, you think too seriously of trifles. I am a little depressed to-day it is true, and talking of home has made me behave like a baby. Please not to speak of it to anybody."

"I never intended doing so, but I am not deceived myself, Effie. I do not ask your confidence, nor would I receive it unless I was sure I could do you good. If you have a hidden wound, my child, I doubt not your religion has taught you how to get it healed, otherwise you have little advantage over me, who profess no particular righteousness."

"Oh, Dora," the anguish of the stifled voice moved my tenderest pity, and I drew her into my arms. "Oh, Dora, if you only knew how slight cause I have to boast of my righteousness;

if you only knew how I am groaning and sinking under a consciousness of my *un*righteousness, you would not torture me by numbering me amongst the professors of godliness. I have no claim to be so regarded.

"Why, Effie," I said, beginning to be really frightened at her excitement and distress, "what have you ever done to forfeit your claim? I am sure you have got hold of some ridiculous shadow, and are trying to convert it into a substance real and heavy enough to crush your poor little heart into the dust. You are over sensitive and scrupulous, my child."

"Oh, no, no, I am weak, and wicked, and unworthy; the knowledge of this is my sharpest wound, Dora. You may believe it, for it is true."

"I do believe it, and every word you say, Effie; but I still must think that you exaggerate

matters in your own mind. You have grown nervous and fanciful for want of the pure, bracing air you have been so long accustomed to. We must make haste and get into Kent."

"Oh, yes, I will speak to Mrs. Errol about going home to-morrow. And now, Dora, let us walk on a little further into the wood; I feel stifling here."

I acceded to her request, although I had already heard the rumbling of distant thunder; but I believed the storm to be still far off, and was more intent upon restoring Effie's composure than upon watching its approach.

It was not till we had penetrated into the thickest part of the wood that we both became suddenly conscious of the rapid darkening of the atmosphere. A drop or two of giant rain drops on the leaves around us, immediately fol-

lowing our discovery of the increasing gloom, added considerably to our uneasiness.

"The storm is upon us," said Effie, clinging tighter to my hand, and looking so utterly helpless that I thought only of her safety.

"I fear, indeed, it is coming fast; we must get out of the wood at all risks. Courage, Effie, the air is already blowing cooler, and we shall soon have strength to run."

"But how shall we find the right path again, Dora? You know we have not been keeping to the same all along."

"True, but there can be no great depth or width in such a wood as this, and even if we fail in finding the way we came in, we shall at least get out somewhere, and just now that is the chief point."

I might well say so, for even as I spoke a vivid flash of lightning broke athwart the gloom,



and was followed by a clap of thunder so loud and startling that we both uttered a faint scream, and instinctively stood still and clung together.

"Don't be frightened, dear," I said, first recovering from the panic, and trying to speak cheerfully, that I might impart courage to my pale and trembling companion, "I dare-say that is the worst we shall have, for see in what fury the rain is beginning to come down."

This was so literally true, that in less than five minutes, in spite of the thick woven branches above our heads, and the running pace we had resumed, our light garments were soaked through and through, and clinging coldly and unpleasantly about us.

My inference, however, with regard to the wilder manifestations of the storm was less accurate, for in a second or two after I had ut-

tered the hopeful prophecy, another and a bluer flash of lightning seemed to open the dark heavens, and was answered by peal upon peal of prolonged and angry thunder, that shook not only us, but the solid ground beneath our feet.

"Dora, I cannot get on; my knees are failing me. This is too, too awful!"

Whether it was anything in the atmosphere, or merely the result of personal agitation, I cannot tell, but Effie's voice appeared wholly changed and unfamiliar to me.

"For Heaven's sake make one more effort, my darling," I said, almost despairingly. "We are in great peril under these trees, and surely we must be near some outlet of the wood."

"No, Dora, we have lost our way, and might wander on till midnight without finding it again. I am not alarmed, believe me, but my strength is

gone. If you have any hope of getting out, in pity leave me here, and save yourself."

"Effie, how can you talk so?"

"But, Dora, indeed I should wish it. I have no more fears; I am in the hands of God."

"Nor have I any fears, Effie, except for you—oh! what a crash!"

I wound my arms tightly round the frail, sinking form of my poor little friend. I kissed her cold cheek and lips; I snatched some of the dripping leaves off the nearest tree, and laid them on her clammy forehead; I pushed aside all the sunny curls, and left the fair face exposed to the fresh breeze that the rain had brought with it, but nothing was of the slightest use, and the next flash of forked lightning, which nearly blinded *me*, glanced as harmlessly over her closed eyes as the glimmer of the palest star would have done.

I laid her down as gently as I could, and then sitting beside her, drew the poor head upon my lap, and felt that God was indeed our only helper.

I had never seen a person faint, except in extreme illness, before, and of course the remedies attainable in a sick room were wholly out of my reach in this lonely wood. I could, in fact, do nothing but weep despairingly over my poor, unconscious darling, whom I verily believed, during those first few moments of bewilderment and fear, to be either dead or dying.

How long I sat there on the wet ground, supporting her head, and chafing between my own her icy hands, I have not the least idea. I know only that it seemed to embrace an age of suffering, and that I positively envied Effie her state of insensibility to the terrors of our situation.

My most distinct recollections of the scene, however, take in less my own emotions at the time than the visible objects by which I was surrounded. The misty torrents of rain bursting from the swollen clouds, the dripping trees, the broken branches scattered here and there upon the sodden ground, the lightning flashing out at intervals, but becoming less vivid and metallic-looking than at first, and the thunder uttering its solemn anger in the distance—all these left in my excited mind a clear and ineffaceable impression.

I believe in my distress I prayed for deliverance, but prayer with me at that period of my life was only a cry of want from a creature to its Creator. I had not learnt to know God as a reconciled and indulgent Father, or I should probably have remembered that blessed and encouraging promise—"Call upon me in the

day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

As it was, I had little hope of an answer to my prayer, and when deliverance really came I was more disposed to attribute it to a fortunate accident than to the intervention of that mighty and gracious power, without whose will not a sparrow falleth to the ground.

As if it were yesterday, instead of long years ago, I remember the joyous bounding of my heart, the sensation of unutterable relief with which I heard my name and Effie's loudly called, in a most energetic voice, apparently at no great distance from us. With all the strength I could muster I answered the call, and in a few more anxious seconds I saw a figure that I soon recognised as Mr. Vincent's, advancing rapidly along one of the narrow winding paths to the right of where we were sitting.

"Thank God!" he said, in a tone of deep emotion, when at length he stood beside me and had not as yet perceived that Effie was insensible; "I thought I should never have found you."

I had covered my companion's face with a handkerchief, fearing that her marble paleness would startle him too much, but seeing that his eyes were now bent enquiringly and excitedly upon the recumbent and motionless figure, I said hastily, struggling with the strong hysteria rising in my throat:

"She has fainted from exhaustion and alarm. I have been trying in vain to bring back consciousness."

In an instant he was kneeling beside her, looking scarcely less pale and death-like, and opening with womanly rather than professional tenderness the closed eyelids, whose dark wet lashes added to the whiteness of the cheek.

"It is only a common fainting fit," he said, with an upward glance of thankfulness that made my heart ache sorely for them both. "If you can wrap some of these shawls I have brought around her, Miss Heathcott, I will soon carry her to the carriage, which is waiting for you at the entrance of the wood."

I did his bidding as well as my trembling fingers would permit, and then, as he took up Effie in his arms—she was such a little thing, and he was so tall and powerful—I asked significantly where Richard was, and if he too had not been anxious about us.

"So anxious, Miss Heathcott," he replied, striding on at such a pace with his precious burden that, all wet and shivering as I was, I had difficulty in keeping near him; "so anxious that in spite of his lame foot he insisted on commencing the search after you with me, but a few



yards sufficed to convince him of his weakness, and I forced him back to the carriage, where he is waiting for us with the utmost impatience."

"He will be terribly alarmed, I fear, at seeing Effie in this state."

Of course I said it purposely, for I was determined at all risks to enlighten him as to the real position of the girl he had evidently permitted himself, in spite of his own engagement, to love. His answer staggered me:

"But you are safe, Miss Heathcott, and for him this will surely be the great consolation. Miss Seymour will soon recover when I can get the proper restoratives."

For a moment my mystification was so complete that I could find no words to reply to him, but as the truth dawned into my mind, I was on the point of speaking, and repudiating this

strange assumption, when an exclamation from Mr. Vincent himself, and the abrupt suspension of his rapid progress, directed all my attention into another channel.

Effie, with a deep sigh, had opened her eyes, and was gazing wonderingly and dreamily around her.

"I am here, darling," I said, going up to her and trying to make her see me before she saw in whose arms she was being carried; "are you better?"

Instead of answering, she raised her head slowly, and looked into Mr. Vincent's face, agitated at that moment as I had never known it before.

The recognition was instantaneous, and the burning blushes that mounted even to her temples, were not the only tokens that boded ill for Richard Errol's peace of mind.

I sincerely pitied *him*, but at that moment I believe I pitied more the two on whom I was gazing; the strong man and the weak girl, drawn together by some magic sympathy, yet destined probably to tread different paths in life, and through all that life to mourn that they had ever met, as thousands had done before them.

Poor dear Effie's first impulse on discovering her supporter was to disengage herself from the sheltering arms, and hide no doubt from him and me her tell-tale embarrassment; but as well might a puny bird have struggled in the grasp of a vulture.

"Lie still," whispered Mr. Vincent soothingly, and something he added in a lower voice which I did not hear, but which at any rate ensured Effie's obedience.

A few more minutes and we were out of the

fatal wood, and it was now Richard's arms that received the pale and shivering form of his unresisting betrothed, while the young doctor and myself were occupied during our rapid drive to the house of Mr. Errol's friend, in endeavouring to restore some circulation to her cold hands and feet.

## CHAPTER XV.

## REST AFTER THE STORM.

HAD Mr. Vincent been in a state of mind to judge dispassionately, he would soon have discovered that the fact of my safety was a matter of far less interest to Richard Errol than that of Effie's illness. He would have read, as I did, more than ordinary emotion in the colourless cheek and compressed lip of the grave man, who listened in perfect silence to my agitated recital

of our dangers and our fears, and who, having done his part in placing the sick girl in the most easy and comfortable posture that our limited space would admit, only ventured to steal a hurried glance at her from time to time, to ascertain whether his friend's encouraging words concerning the passing nature of the sudden illness, were to be relied upon.

For Effie had relapsed into a state of partial unconsciousness on the first movement of the carriage, and to the novice in these matters, there was quite enough to terrify in the strange and unnatural pallor of her complexion, and the apparently painful quivering of the closed and almost transparent eyelids.

But it was not long that we were any of us doomed to bear our respective anxieties and discomforts, for in less than ten minutes from the time we had entered the carriage our short drive

was at an end, and we were deposited in safety at Mr. Seton's door.

The scene which took place on our arrival was one of so much excitement and confusion that I should feel myself utterly powerless in describing it. The concerned and anxious attentions of our host and hostess—the latter a maiden sister belonging to the Society of Friends,—the deep and tearful thankfulness of Mrs. Errol as she assisted in restoring Effie, the silent emotion of the husband as he pressed his son's hand, and *looked* the sympathy he forbore in the presence of so many witnesses to express, and the eager questions of the three girls while they flew about under Mr. Vincent's orders, in search of smelling bottles, cold water, and other necessities, formed altogether a tableau of no little interest, though I must confess that I should have enjoyed it better had I not been one of the unfortunate

actors in the tragedy which had given rise to so much unusual excitement, and interrupted so unexpectedly the enjoyment of our delightful holiday.

For the plain truth was that while everybody was occupied about poor Effie, I was beginning to shiver violently, and to feel very faint and ill myself, so that when Miss Seton, who was the first to find it out, said in her kind, anxious voice, "Thee must go to bed directly," I felt no inclination to dispute her order, though the sun had at length broken through the watery clouds, and the evening was promising to be one of summer's loveliest.

Before I left the drawing-room Effie was sitting up and smiling faintly upon the throng of busy attendants around her, and as Miss Seton hurried me away I heard them tell my fellow sufferer that she too must consent to be put into a warm



bed, and endeavour to sleep off the remains of her illness.

They none of them seemed to think that it was likely to be serious.

I shall never forget the luxury I experienced in getting off my wet clothes and lying down in that soft, snowy looking bed, to which Miss Seton introduced me. I think I see it now, standing in its shady recess adorned with white muslin drapery, and thus contrasting somewhat quaintly with the dark oak, of which the rest of the furniture of the exquisitely clean and neat apartment was composed, almost too neat and clean it seemed to be invaded by such a dripping naiad as myself, though the dear little quakeress only smiled indignantly when I gave utterance to this opinion.

“Would thee like thy friend to come and lie beside thee?” she asked, as I was trying to thank

her for her kindness, and saying how deliciously comfortable I felt.

"Certainly," I replied eagerly, "there is abundance of room, and we should both prefer being together."

"But then there must be no talking remember, for that pretty creature down stairs is in great need of rest. I must have thy promise on this point first."

I gave it willingly, and in a few minutes after Miss Seton had left me, she returned with Effie and Mrs. Errol, the former quite as willing as I had been to be divested of her clinging garments, and longing to share the quiet repose that she found me enjoying.

They brought us some warm tea, which seemed to my parched lips and throat the most delicious and refreshing beverage I had ever tasted, and then drawing down the cool green blinds till all

the bright sunshine was excluded, they left us to court the slumbers we might certainly be said to have purchased.

Remembering my promise to Miss Seton I would not say a single word to my companion, who fortunately appeared herself to have no inclination for talking. I felt her press tenderly with her little feverish hand the arm with which I had encircled her waist, I heard a few low broken sighs, that might have been the spontaneous utterances of a heavy heart, or the unconscious efforts at relief of an exhausted body, and then by the fuller and more regular breathing I knew that she had fallen into a healthy sleep, and I was glad and thankful.

For my own part, although I was unquestionably excessively tired both mentally and bodily, I had seldom felt more thoroughly wakeful. In vain I closed my eyes and repeated over and

over again long pieces of poetry which had served for my lullaby on various occasions since the days of childhood; in vain, I said to the thronging and importunate thoughts that beset me, begone at least till to-morrow; they would not leave me for a minute, and I was at length fain to receive and entertain them, bidding a most reluctant adieu to the sleep which just then would have been so infinitely better welcomed.

The truth I suppose was, that anything like a situation of responsibility and difficulty was so new to me that I had no idea in the world how to get out of it, and my natural and long indulged indolence of disposition made the necessity for exertion far from agreeable to me.

I would have given a great deal to have known and seen no more than others knew and saw regarding Effie and her lovers; but having unfortunately made certain disagreeable dis-

coveries, I thought I was bound to rouse myself and do the best I could in the matter. The important point was to find out what *would* be the best, and this difficulty was just the foremost of those tormenting thoughts that kept me broad awake, staring at Miss Séton's antique furniture, when I ought to have been wandering in dream-land, like the pale and motionless sleeper at my side.

Of course I am not going to trouble my readers with the whole concourse of sage or foolish reflections that passed in the twilight of that summer evening through my own rather excited brain. I will only mention the result, produced by all the pros and cons I had been so carefully weighing, and which referred to the grave question as to whether Richard Errol or Mr. Vincent could best endure to have his life's happiness sacrificed.

I thought I knew Effie well enough to be persuaded that duty in the end would be the greatest happiness for her, and perhaps this conviction influenced me insensibly in the decision I was at length enabled to form.

It was simply to take upon myself on the earliest possible opportunity to tell Mr. Vincent how matters stood, and to urge him, if he required urging, to shun at once and for ever the society which had proved so fatal to his peace, and if the report we had heard was correct, surely to the peace of another also.

This once settled, and dwelt on till I was assured of its being the wisest and safest course I could adopt, my aching eyes and weary brain no longer refused to act in concert: and after a long, delightful sleep I awoke to find the soft moonbeams reflected in a mirror opposite our bed, and by the aid of this pure silvery light to

see Effie's large blue eyes wide open, and tears shining upon the dark lashes and moistening the flushed cheeks.

Before I could speak to her a quiet footstep stole to our side, and looking up I perceived our kind hostess, who had been sitting by the window, now disembarassed of its dark blinds, watching the holy moonlight, and waiting for us to awake.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## FORGET-ME-NOTS.

"THEE hast had a good rest," said the little lady, smiling benevolently upon me, as I sat up in bed, wondering at the time I must have slept. "I hope it has been of benefit to thee."

"Thank you," I said; "I feel greatly refreshed and strengthened by it. I am afraid it is very late."

"About nine 'o'clock. Thy friends started



more than an hour ago, and have left thee and Effie : eymour in my care till to-morrow."

Upon hearing this unexpected piece of news, Effie, who had lain with her eyes closed since the commencement of my dialogue with Miss Seton, sprang up, and gave every token of being as wide awake as myself.

In answer to our enquiries she declared that she felt much better, but her dry burning hands contradicted the assertion, and I agreed with our hostess that it would have been impossible for her to have returned to London that night.

My own opinion indeed was that she ought to see a doctor, but Miss Seton assured me that she understood something of medicine herself, and that a cooling draught she would mix, with the addition of a mustard bath for the feet, would do all for Effie that anybody could do at present.

On my repeated assertion that I was now quite well, she allowed me to get up and assist in attending upon my more delicate fellow-sufferer, who seemed to shrink nervously from the ministrations of strangers, and to cling to me in her present helplessness with the same confidence she had so touchingly manifested during our terror and danger in the wood.

I was glad for her sake when all was at length over, and we were left alone again for the night.

"Shall I read you to sleep, my darling?" I asked, as the wide open eyes and the restless tossings of the little head upon the pillow made me fear that Miss Seton's remedies would have slight effect.

"Thank you very much, Dora; but you must be tired yourself, and I don't suppose there are any books in the room that would interest you."

"Never mind me, Effie, if you like them. Let me tell you the names of some." And I took the lamp and walked to the book-case to examine its contents.

"Here is Milton; here is Young's Night Thoughts; here is Montgomery; here is Kirke White; here is the Life of Elizabeth Fry; here are various hymn books; here is the History of the Reformation in a great many volumes; and, finally, here is the Bible."

"Then read me, please, a chapter in that, Dora, and then come to bed."

"Where shall I read, my child?"

"If you have no choice yourself, read the fifth of the second of Corinthians. It is a favourite of mine."

I obeyed her request, wondering, as I went on through the chapter, what train of thought or state of feeling had led her to choose what

appeared to me such a melancholy subject for this occasion.

Her eyes were wet again when I finished, but without making any remark thereon I asked her if I should continue reading?

"No, thank you," she replied, in a low, faint voice. And there was something in its lowness and faintness that mingled unpleasantly in my thoughts with the first few verses of the chapter she had chosen, and kept me awake long after I had yielded to her earnest desire, and lain down in my place beside her.

The morning found poor Effie, as I had expected, quite unable to rise. Increased feverishness, aching in all the limbs, and a general prostration, were among the symptoms that she was obliged to acknowledge; and after talking with her for a few minutes, and feeling the hot, parched skin, Miss Seton said she should take

upon herself to send for their own doctor, who would prescribe for the patient till some of the Errol family arrived from London—as had been agreed upon the previous night—to see how we were both getting on.

I did not wish to leave my poor little friend to go down to breakfast, which took place in this old-fashioned, methodical family at the early hour of seven o'clock; but Miss Seton urged me so strongly to do so, bringing her maid (a steady looking Quakeress) to attend on Effie during my absence, that I felt it would be uncourteous to refuse, especially as she said her brother was waiting to be introduced to me.

I found in Mr. Seton a most interesting type of a class that I had believed wholly extinct, a thoroughly chivalrous gentleman of the old school, who, had it not been for his strong religious principles, would probably have rivalled

the far-famed Don Quixote in his romantic devotion and courtly attention to the weaker sex. Tempered as this peculiarity of character was by good sense and unaffected piety, it gave a singular charm and grace to the individual, and made Mr. Seton, an old man, then nearly seventy, one of the most fascinating persons it was ever my lot to meet.

He was deeply concerned to hear of the continued indisposition of his other guest, but hoped that out of this decided evil might be wrought for him and his sister the happiness of our society for several days to come. I looked around on the fair, enchanting scene that the open windows gave to view, and replied most truthfully that I should have sincere pleasure in accepting his invitation; and discovering in my agreeable host as ardent a lover of nature as myself, I had got into a most animated conver-

sation with him, when a loud ring at the gate bell startled us all, and made me too intent on wondering who it could be to continue talking, for Miss Seton had said immediately that they never had any visitors before twelve or one o'clock, and that their man servant had only just started in quest of the doctor.

I was afraid that it would prove to be Mr. Vincent, for although I wanted to see him, I should have been sorry for Effie to have had such a proof of his devotion (as this early visit would have implied) to dwell upon in her lonely musings.

It was consequently with something more than relief I experienced when the door opened and admitted Richard Errol, junior.

He was looking grave and rather heavy, but not so self-possessed as a less nervous and sensi-

tive man would have looked on such an occasion. He had reflected probably that the step he had taken would reveal to these comparative strangers his more than ordinary interest in Effie, and this ill suited the peculiar tone of the mind which I was just learning in some degree to understand and appreciate.

"You must have been indeed an early riser," I said, shaking hands with him after he had greeted the master and mistress of the house; "we did not expect any one from town before eleven or twelve o'clock."

"I slept in the village," he replied with embarrassment; "my father and myself agreed that it would be best to do so in case either of you young ladies should be worse this morning, and hesitate about having medical advice. I fear," he continued, in a lower voice, that was anxious in spite of his efforts at self control,



"that Miss Seymour is still suffering from the effects of yesterday."

"She is not so well, certainly, as we could wish," replied Miss Seton, who had evidently divined the truth at once, "but there is no need for thee to be over anxious, friend Richard. I have sent for our family doctor, and no doubt he will be here in less than half an hour. Sit thee down and take some breakfast in the meanwhile. Let my brother help thee from the dish he has before him?"

"Thank you," said Richard, "but I have no inclination to eat. Has Miss Seymour passed a bad night?"

"No," I answered, feeling my own appetite all gone. "I believe she slept very well, but she is a little feverish this morning, and has evidently taken cold from the long exposure to the wet."

Mr. Seton now made a few remarks, expressive of a hope that a day or two's nursing would set all to rights, and his sister having finished her breakfast, said she would leave us to return to the invalid.

Pitying Richard with all my heart, I soon moved from the table, and telling Mr. Seton I was longing for a closer inspection of his beautiful grounds, I ventured to invite the last comer to take a stroll with me.

"Yes, go," said our kind and sympathizing host, unfolding his newspaper and settling himself in his easy chair, "you will find enough to amuse you for half-an-hour, and by that time I daresay the doctor's visit will have been paid."

"Tell me truly what you think of her," were Richard's first words as we began crossing the sunny lawn that sloped down to a small sparkling lake, shadowed with magnificent willows.

"I think she is ill, but I can as yet see no reason for being alarmed. She is very young, and though delicate her constitution appears good."

He made no reply to this, and not knowing what other comfort to offer I walked on in silence by his side till we came to the edge of the lake, where rustic seats beneath the hanging trees seemed inviting us to arrest our progress.

"Would you like to sit down?" he asked me in his natural voice, "this is a kind of scene that must have many attractions for you. It is exceedingly lovely."

I sat down and he took a place near me.

"I am afraid," I said then, "that your foot is paining you. I should not have tempted you to walk so far after the exertions of yesterday."

"I have scarcely remembered it, thank you,

but it *is* painful. Miss Heathcott, you will not leave Effie while she is ill."

"Certainly not. I shall stay here with her."

"That is if she cannot be moved, but I hope it will be possible to get her back to London to-morrow. My mother could not leave home, and she will I know be miserable till Effie is under her care again."

I felt perfectly certain that his hopes on this point would be disappointed, but I only said—

"How long can you remain here?"

"Only till noon to-day. I have business in town that must be attended to. Vincent is coming down about eleven, and he will bring a carriage in which we shall return together."

It never seemed to strike Richard that there was anything unusual or suspicious in the fact of this young man's having proposed to come in

person a distance of nearly twenty miles to enquire after the health of Effie Seymour. I could not help remarking,

"If Mr. Vincent is coming professionally, it is a pity that Miss Seton should have sent for another medical man."

"Oh, no; I am glad she has. Vincent is a clever fellow, but he would not expect Effie to be entrusted to his care. He is only coming as a friend, and perhaps with the good-natured view of sparing me a solitary drive home."

"He knows then of your engagement?"

I should not have ventured so far but that from my friendship for Effie, I was somewhat of a privileged person with Richard.

"He may possibly divine it," was the hasty reply, in a tone that convinced me that I was not rendering myself too agreeable, "but we men, Miss Heathcott, do not necessarily require or

make confidants of our most sacred feelings like you ladies.”

I was rebuked, and would not advance a step further on this dangerous ground.

Presently Richard looked at his watch.

“It is nearly half an hour since we left the house; do you think the doctor can have come, Miss Heathcott?”

“Shall I go and see?”

“If you would be so good.” And his voice and look both said how grateful he felt to be left alone.

I met Miss Seton and the doctor in the hall, they were talking earnestly together.

“It is a good report that our friend here gives of the patient,” said the former as I appeared, “nothing worse than a common cold accompanied by a few rheumatic symptoms, but she must be kept in bed for two or three days, and therefore

we shall have you both as our guests. Where is Richard Errol?"

"Waiting for me under the willows," I replied, hurriedly; "I will go at once and relieve his anxieties about dear Effie."

In three minutes I was again standing nearly breathless beside him.

"It is all right, Effie will be well in a day or two; I am so glad."

And then I turned away and went down close to the water, for I saw *that* in his eyes which I knew he would not care for me to see—and my heart, cold as it was said to be—was stirred strangely in its sympathy with this unattractive man.

A few minutes elapsed and then he joined me where I stood; and that I might not appear to notice his emotion I offered him half of the little bunch of forget-me-nots I had been plucking, and

made some common-place remark about the beauty of the flower.

"Thank you," he said, as he accepted the gift.

And I could not help fancying that his acknowledgment had as much reference to the motive which had actuated me, as to the simple offering itself.

For Richard Errol was no sentimentalist, and even if he had been, the present would not have been a fit occasion for the display of any folly of this kind.

"Then I will go now," he said, after having deposited the flowers with much care in his pocketbook, "for to speak frankly, I have not slept all night, and an hour or two's rest will be acceptable. Should Vincent come here first, Miss Heathcott, perhaps you will tell him that I must start punctually at twelve."



"I will not fail. Have you any other commission for me?"

He hesitated for a moment and then said:

"Did I understand you that Effie will have to remain here after to-morrow."

"I fear so, but I shall of course be with her. You do not doubt that I shall take good care of her?"

"No indeed—but will you give her this?"

And he drew out the pocket book again, and wrote a few lines in pencil which he folded and placed in my hands.

"Immediately. Do you expect to be down to-morrow or the next day?"

"I cannot tell. You will write to some of us."

"Certainly."

"Then good morning, Miss Heathcott. I

must just go in and say farewell to Mr. Seton and his sister."

"And I will go at once to Effie. Good bye."

We shook hands in the cool fashion that was natural to us both and parted.

## CHAPTER XVII.

ARTHUR VINCENT.

EFFIE'S pale cheeks flushed deeply as she read the few lines Richard had written, and listened to my account of the anxiety he had been suffering about her.

"It was very kind, indeed, of him to stay all night in the village," she said, when I had finished my recital, and taken a seat by her bedside.

"Don't you think so?" she continued pre-

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sently, as I made no answer to her observation.

"I don't think the word well chosen, Effie. The strong attachment which impelled Richard to remain near you in your illness can scarcely be called kindness, because kindness implies some sort of personal sacrifice, and here there was none. He will make the sacrifice to-day in going to town while you are unavoidably detained in the country."

"What a champion of Richard's you have suddenly become," she remarked, with a faint smile.

And then, as to this also I made no reply, she fell into a fit of musing, which I had no inclination at present to intrude upon.

Half an hour passed away without any further conversation. I had taken a book, which proved sufficiently interesting to engross my attention,

and Effie had closed her eyes, and seemed disposed to sleep.

Suddenly the door opened softly, and Miss Seton, bringing with her some beautiful, freshly-gathered flowers, came on tiptoe into the room.

"There is a gentleman down stairs," she whispered to me, "who would be glad to speak with thee a minute. It is the young doctor who was here last night. I will sit by friend Effie in thy absence. I am glad to find that she sleeps."

But friend Effie was no more asleep than we were, as I knew by the quick mantling of the blood over her cheek and brow, as she caught the purport of Miss Seton's whisper. No doubt the poor child would have given much to have compromised with her conscience, and feigned the quiet slumber attributed to her; but the conscience was pure and faithful, spite of all the

weakness of the heart, so she opened her eyes instantly, and said she had not been asleep at all.

"I am sorry for it," replied the quakeress, "for sleep is thy best chance of a speedy recovery; but I will keep thee company at any rate while friend Dora, or Dorothy as she ought to be called, goes down to this young man."

Mr. Vincent was standing alone, in the middle of the large, plainly-furnished drawing-room when I went in. He was looking more impatient than Richard in his moments of greatest anxiety had done. Unhappy too, but I had no pity or sympathy to spare for him.

"Miss Heathcott," he began the instant he saw me, "I have to apologise for troubling you to come down to me, especially as Miss Seton has been good enough to answer all my enquiries regarding the health of—of your fellow sufferer,

but I wanted to hear your confirmation of the favourable statements. Do you think Miss Seymour is really better?"

I had no interest in making the best of the case to him, so I replied rather stiffly:

"The doctor's opinion ought to be ample satisfaction for all Miss Seymour's friends. Had I been without this authority I could scarcely have pronounced her better."

He made no attempt to conceal the pain and anxiety my words occasioned him; it was the very antipodes of Richard Errol I had now to deal with, and in spite of my predisposition to judge this young man harshly, I could not avoid feeling a little softened at his evident distress.

"What makes you doubt her being better?" he asked abruptly, looking at me keenly as he spoke.

"I did not say I doubted it, Mr. Vincent,

only that it is less apparent to me than it seems to be to others. Effie has a great deal of fever, and I always thought this was an unfavourable symptom."

"So it is. Who is this doctor that they have brought to her?"

"I do not know, but from his age I should presume he has had a pretty long experience."

Mr. Vincent began walking up and down the room, and I felt my courage for the task I had undertaken diminishing every moment. I did not know how to introduce the subject, how to make the announcement. I dreaded the effect it might have upon him in his present anxious and excited state; but at length I bethought me of Richard's message, and delivered it in the hope that it would elicit some remark that might serve as an opening.

"Ah," said my companion, as if he had only



just remembered his friend's existence, "he has been here before me, of course. He must have been thankful indeed, to find you up and well."

"Possibly," I replied, looking with much intentness into an oil painting that fortunately hung near me. "Possibly Mr. Errol's philanthropy would have led him to rejoice in this circumstance, had it been an unconnected fact; but it is surely expecting too much of a man in his position, to attribute to him any thoughts at all about me, while Effie Seymour is laid upon a bed of sickness."

I felt very like a person who has fired a deadly shot, and waits to see his victim fall at his feet.

Mr. Vincent appeared to make one giant stride from his own place in the room to that where I was standing.

"What do you mean, Miss Heathcott? surely

you are jesting, or I have failed to understand you rightly."

His voice was thick, and trembling like a girl's and his face white with agitation.

"I am not jesting, Mr. Vincent," I said, having now no choice but to turn and confront my antagonist. "I thought long ago that you ought to have been informed of Richard's engagement to Miss Seymour, but they assured me you were yourself engaged, and that therefore Richard's shrinking from having these matters publicly canvassed, might safely be indulged."

He sat down and concealed his face for a few minutes. I did indeed pity him then, for I could understand that where my sweet Effie was loved at all, she must be loved intensely, and this young man had evidently been cherishing the most sanguine hopes concerning her.

At length he looked up, and when I dared to turn my eyes towards him, I saw the great violence of the storm had passed over. Whatever might have been his secret anguish, he had controlled himself, and from that moment I respected and admired him.

"Miss Heathcott," he said, "I am infinitely obliged to you for the communication you have just made to me, not the less so for the sudden pain it occasioned. I ought to have known all this sooner—there was little wisdom in the concealment—but to justify myself in your eyes, I must tell you that I am not engaged nor ever have been. There is a young lady residing with my mother, whom the latter has always been most anxious for me to marry, and I have had reason more than once to fear that she has spoken of it to our friends as a settled thing. Doubtless it was from her that Richard heard this re-

port, and of course my apparent want of confidence sealed his lips with regard to his own engagement. But had he kept his eyes open, he would have acted more judiciously. Miss Heathcott, he must never know what *you* appear to have guessed. He is a noble fellow, and deserves the happiness he has obtained."

To have listened to the above words without seeing the man who spoke them, one might have thought that, after all, this love had not been such a very serious matter, or that at any rate it would easily be got over. But I saw as well as heard, and I knew that whatever change or amelioration the future might bring, the present was to Arthur Vincent but a wide, gloomy shore, whereon breathed no living thing, and where all he saw was the shattered wreck of his lost happiness.

"You may depend upon my discretion, Mr.

Vincent," I replied, as he seemed waiting for this assurance. "Richard Errol has a cold exterior, but had you been with him an hour ago you would not have questioned the depth or intensity of his attachment to Effie."

"And Effie herself, Miss Heathcott? Oh! do me the justice to believe that I shall be glad to hear now that she loves him well in return."

I did believe him implicitly. I was beginning to discover that Richard had not over-estimated his friend's worth of character, but what could I answer to such a question?

My hesitation caused him to look at me quickly and searchingly. For a moment—one only—there flashed a bright, startling light into his eye. Alas! the earthly paradise that ardent imagination had painted was not for him, and before I spoke he seemed to have regained his former patient acquiescence.

"Effie," I said, "will be happy with her husband, and I am quite sure will learn to love him as he deserves to be loved. She would be most miserable in sacrificing what she believes to be duty to any other feeling."

After a silence that I would no more have dared to interrupt than the devotion of a saint, he replied, in a voice that was plaintive in spite of all his tutoring:

"You are right, Miss Heathcott. Neither Effie nor any who has learnt in the school she has done, can accept unsanctioned happiness. I shall not see her again, not at least for a long time; but as she will probably hear of my visit you may tell her that amongst all her numerous friends none will more ardently pray for her peace and contentment, both now and in her married life, than Arthur Vincent. Let me once more thank *you* for the real kindness you

have manifested towards me, and bid you farewell for who knows how long a period."

"Then we shall not see you in Bloomsbury Square again?"

"Not yet at any rate. My mother has for some time wished me to travel with her on the continent, and as my practice is not very extensive I shall endeavour to make arrangements for leaving it for awhile. Were I to remain in London and absent myself altogether from the family with whom I have been latterly on such intimate terms, suspicions would be awakened which need never now arise."

"Then good-bye indeed, Mr. Vincent; and let me just say how truly sorry I am to have been the messenger of evil tidings to you."

He shook my hand warmly to show me he appreciated both what I had done and the compunction I had felt in doing it, and then, wishing

me health and happiness, and commending Effie to my care and friendship (he guessed, perhaps, that she would stand in more than common need of both) he left the house he had entered with such different feelings, to keep his appointment with his friend.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

## THE SICK GIRL.

I sat by Effie all that afternoon, and I had delivered faithfully the message entrusted to me by Mr. Vincent and witnessed the painfully depressing effect it had upon her, and yet though my heart truly mourned for what I believed my poor gentle darling to be suffering, my thoughts were ever wandering to the two men, the two friends, the two rivals who were driving home together through those sweet country scenes, and

doubtless talking indifferently of things the most remote from the thoughts and hearts of each.

I scarcely knew now which I pitied most, though one, to all common observation, had reason to be supremely happy, and the other supremely miserable.

It was a difficult question to decide, looking at Effie as she lay there, so pale, and still, and sad, and knowing as I did, that while her hand and faith were pledged and would be given to one, her tender loving heart was clinging irresistibly to the other.

Had the veil been drawn aside which hid the future from my view, I should, however, have had no doubt on the subject.

But I pictured Arthur Vincent now, sitting beside his more fortunate companion, concealing, as I was sure he would, every vestige of the grief which had so abruptly shadowed his life, and if

Richard at length confided to him his happiness and his love, striving hard to sympathize with both in heart as well as word.

And after all it was such a pity, such an apparent cruelty on the part of destiny, for Effie and Mr. Vincent would have suited each other so well. He had not the great self-sufficient mind of Richard Errol, and a wife's constant tenderness and readiness to enter into all his joys and sorrows would be absolutely essential to his happiness and peace. His own nature too was peculiarly affectionate and demonstrative, and admirably adapted to satisfy the somewhat weak but feminine and most attractive tendrilism of Effie's disposition. He would have made her at once his companion and his friend, and elevated her mind by thus uniting it with his own.

And what would Richard Errol do to promote

the happiness of the gentle being who was to pass her life by his side?

He would indeed do all that his instincts and character enabled him to do, but it was more than possible that his very anxiety on the subject would cause him to miss the mark, and that the strong, sheltering, almost idolatrous love he would feel for his youthful wife, would, in spite of all his efforts, meet no other return than the gentle gratitude, obedience, and esteem, which Effie already yielded to him.

In fact, that golden link of sympathy or affinity was wanting, without which even congeniality on the most important of all points, I mean on the point of religion, will sometimes fail to insure happiness and confidence in married life.

I confess that all this had struck me less before Arthur Vincent came in the way, and even now I feared more for her husband than for Effie, but

still as mine was the dreaming imaginative time of life, I could not help tormenting myself with foolish thoughts of what might have been, and exclaiming regretfully, "oh, the pity of it!"

Effie asked me no questions concerning my long interview with Mr. Vincent, and I thought it better to leave her to her own conjectures than to enter into an account of what had taken place, especially as towards the evening her feverish symptoms increased, and the doctor, who paid her a second visit, prescribed the most perfect quiet and freedom from every species of excitement.

I wrote a few lines to Mrs. Errol the last thing that night, telling her how Effie really was, and suggesting that if possible she should herself come down on the following day and see the patient.

I was not so sanguine as the rest of them concerning this illness, and the occurrences of the day had depressed me so much that I was inclined to fear all things.

The morning however brought a little sunshine with it, over and above that which streamed in through our closed curtains at an early hour, for Effie had passed a good night, and the fever had considerably abated. She wanted indeed to get up and go down with me to breakfast, but I had the excellent excuse of her possessing no clothes fit to be seen in. Miss Seton had found some that did tolerably well for me, belonging to a school girl niece whom these relatives had adopted and who had been spending her holidays at Beech House; but Effie would have been lost in the long garments that fitted me, and I made her laugh in almost her old way, by proposing as the only resource that she should

attire herself in Miss Seton's sober quaker costume.

The sister and brother were both delighted to hear of the improvement in their invalid guest, and Mr. Seton was made especially happy by the promise that if she continued to amend, and a fresh supply of clothes arrived from London, she should be presented to him at dinner time. The old gentleman had lived so long out of the world that the sight of a pretty woman was a most pleasing novelty to him, and even on the evening of our arrival he must have discovered more than ordinary loveliness in the little fainting girl that we were all making such a fuss about.

Dear Mrs. Errol arrived about the middle of the day with our clothes, and medicines and remedies of her own innumerable. My letter had caused her great anxiety, and Richard,

having insisted on seeing it, had hurried her off, and was coming down to fetch her in the evening.

I was glad to hear this, and still more glad to observe that Effie did not seem displeased or sorry. She assured her future mother that there was nothing in her present illness to create the least alarm, and strove in her most winning, loving way to dispel the fears which my letter had excited.

"I was very nearly telegraphing for your papa," said Mrs. Errol as she leant over the bed and examined with her experienced, matronly eyes the constantly varying expression of its occupant; "how should you have liked that, Effie?"

"Oh, not at all. Papa would have thought it the greatest nonsense in the world. You know he is not an anxious or a nervous person."



"Does she cough much, Dora?" asked Mrs. Errol, suddenly turning towards me, and speaking, I thought, as if her uneasiness had not been lessened by this long looking into Effie's face.

"No, and when she does, it is only a little short cough, not in the least hard or noisy."

Mrs. Errol sat down now, and tried to talk cheerfully to us both, but I detected the increased anxiety of her countenance, and knew that she was listening intently for the cough I had been describing.

The first time she heard it her colour changed, and her eyes, perhaps unconsciously, became riveted upon Effie, who, taking a spoonful of currant jelly that I offered her, said lightly :

"You see, dear Mrs. Errol, what a mere nothing this cough is. I am really quite ashamed of being treated any longer as an invalid."

"Nevertheless, my dear," returned Mrs. Errol, "I should strongly have recommended your staying in bed if it had not been for Richard's coming, but he would be so disappointed at not seeing you this evening."

To this Effie made no reply, and soon after Miss Seton joined us.

Later in the day, while Mrs. Errol was unpacking the things that Effie was to put on, she exclaimed suddenly:

"By the bye, girls, I had nearly forgotten the news I have to tell you, and yet I was thinking of it a good deal myself all yesterday afternoon. Our friend, Mr. Vincent, is going to run away from us to travel on the continent with his mother. My children at home are all so sorry, and really he has become so much like one of us, that we shall miss him terribly at first."

I was brushing Effie's tangled hair when this announcement was made, she sitting up in bed, and I leaning as well as I could over to her. I could not help, therefore, remarking the rapidly changing colour of her cheeks as Mrs. Errol spoke, but I was surprised when, abruptly arresting my hand, she pressed it significantly, and whispered almost inaudibly:

"Say something—do—in answer."

I obeyed her instantly.

"We shall indeed miss him, for he has been a general favourite, but I suppose it will be for his advantage to travel abroad."

"It may be so, but I cannot help thinking that it is connected with some attachment. You know his mother assured Richard long ago that he was engaged to her ward or *protégée*, and yesterday Arthur himself denied this, and said that he did not think he should ever marry."

"Is the young lady in question going to travel with them?"

I asked this for the sake of saying something, and giving Effie time to recover her composure.

"Oh, I don't know anything about their arrangements. Richard fancied his friend was in bad spirits, but that might arise from a variety of causes. It is only my woman's foolishness that has built a little romance upon the circumstances mentioned to me. But what says my youngest daughter to the news I have been communicating?"

Dear Mrs. Errol was the most unsuspicious creature in the world, and meant nothing further, I am perfectly convinced, by this remark than to interest the silent Effie in our conversation, but Effie's sudden agitation proved to me that she interpreted the question other-

wise. Her voice literally trembled as she said:—

“I think Mr. Vincent is quite right to go if his mother wishes it, and to Dora and myself it cannot much signify, as we shall soon be in Kent.”

“Then you too intend leaving us, Effie? We shall have a mournful house indeed.”

I saw that every word that was spoken was increasing Effie's agitation. Her eyes were fast filling with tears, and the first sound of her voice must have betrayed her.

It was time to come to the rescue.

“Dear Mrs. Errol,” I said, “you have no idea how late it is getting. You will have barely time to dress yourself for dinner. Leave me to finish Effie; you see her hair is just done, and my own toilette requires no further change.”

This succeeded in sending the unconscious little woman with all haste to her own room, and then feigning not to notice that there was anything unusual the matter with my poor darling, I talked to her on all kinds of foolish subjects while the business of dressing was going on, and by the time it was finished had the satisfaction of seeing that her pale face was composed and quiet, and expressing nothing so strongly as the meek and patient resignation which in characters like hers is ever a foremost virtue.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## MY CONFIDANT.

I HAD dressed Effie in white, as the weather was still exceedingly warm, but in consideration of her cough I threw over her a crimson shawl, which gave a slight glow to her colourless cheek, and altogether became her admirably.

She was of course the great object of attraction and attention with us all during dinner, and under the influence of Mr. Seton's genial cheerfulness and old-fashioned gallantry, her

spirits wonderfully revived, so that as it approached the hour when Richard was expected, she had become quite animated, and looked, I thought, lovelier than I had ever seen her.

We went into the drawing-room early, that Effie might lie on the sofa; and Miss Seton had just made the tea, and persuaded me to try the notes of their old harpsichord, when the bell without signalized a coming guest, and sent Mrs. Errol with well-pleased looks to the window.

"It is Richard," I heard her say, and then whispering something to Miss Seton, she drew that lady out with her through a window that opened on the lawn, and I comprehended that the kindly heart of the mother had seen into that of her son, and thus provided against the necessity of his meeting Effie in public.

I did not know whether she regarded me as a



nonentity on the occasion, but being conscious myself of a distinct existence and individuality, and esteeming Richard well enough to make some sacrifice for his sake, I sprang from my own seat as the door opened, and without having time to give a single glance towards Effie, made a hasty retreat in the direction the others had taken.

I did not find them, however, and having as yet had little opportunity of examining the beautiful grounds surrounding Mr. Seton's house, I rambled on in delightful admiration amongst clumps of rare foreign looking shrubs, that filled the evening air with perfume, and lent to the calmly smiling scene a charm that I almost painfully appreciated.

By and bye I came to the end of this cultivated paradise, and found myself in a grove of flowering acacia and lime trees, under which were placed rustic seats of the quaintest forms,

and where the sense of loneliness was as complete as the most sentimental dreamer could desire.

I was not a sentimental dreamer, but I loved solitude occasionally even yet, and I had lived for the last few weeks so completely in the hopes and fears of others, that the egotism inherent in my nature began to assert its claim, and to urge me to bestow a little quiet attention on my own future prospects.

The happiness I had experienced in Mrs. Errol's family, had not deprived me of that spirit of independence which had from the first determined me to earn my own livelihood, but the question as to my fitness for the office of instructress had certainly struck me as a more important one, since Mrs. Errol, as well as her husband, had so frankly stated her doubts on the subject.

It was impossible to have been an inmate in

this family for the period I had enjoyed that privilege without conceiving for them and for their principles, a more than common esteem. Whatever might have been my previous prejudices against the kind of religion they professed, or my continued disinclination to adopt it for myself, I could not help admitting that there was a deep reality in it, and one that so far from casting a gloom over social life, gave to it a charm which was altogether new to me. A more enlarged experience taught me that religion does not always exhibit the pleasing and attractive face it did in this first instance of my being brought in contact with it. Natural character must ever count for a good deal in the outward deportment of a Christian professor, and I think if this were more constantly borne in mind, religion itself would not so frequently suffer in the judgment of the ungodly, from the absence of what

they may consider lovely and loveable in the conduct of its disciples.

A person of constitutional gaiety will carry this gaiety in a softened and modified form into his new life of Christian practice and obedience, while another of a gloomier temperament will retain, at any rate in some degree, his peculiar tendency, and thus be hindered from adorning the doctrine he professes, in the opinion of all those who reckon outward cheerfulness the great desideratum of human character.

I shall always regard it as an especial mercy that I first saw true piety under a smiling instead of a frowning aspect, but that it may exist, and be pure and undefiled, under both, I am as firmly convinced as of any other truth in connection with this great subject.

But to resume the thread of my meditations in Mr. Seton's acacia grove; I have said that I

had begun to feel less unscrupulous about accepting the post of governess, than I was before I knew the Errols. Common sense, if not conscience, told me that I did not rejoice in the necessary qualifications for educating the minds and hearts of young children. My own studies had ever been of a most desultory kind, my tastes were peculiar, and my habits, both of thought and action, anything but settled and industrious. I had not even the excuse of being fond of the juvenile race, to gloss over my numerous deficiencies. I had never accustomed myself to the society of very young people, and having had rather a dull childhood of my own, I had few associations that might have engendered sympathies belonging to that period of life, and less knowledge concerning its natural instincts and requirements.

Clearly then, even upon my own showing, I

had no right to propose myself as a teacher and companion to the young. By doing so I might be excluding those whose characters and education fitted them better for the office, and even if this consequence were not involved, at least I was bound to keep my conscience clear of assuming a responsibility I was unequal to bear.

But what then was the alternative? By what means was I to escape the dire necessity of eating the bread of idleness, and drinking the bitter water of dependence—bitter in spite of any possible amount of kindness and generosity on the part of those who bestow it?

I might certainly manage to obtain the situation of companion to some fine and fashionable lady, who would make me the slave of her lightest caprice, and perhaps dispute my claim to the consideration of a gentlewoman, because I took a salary for my services. But no, I felt

had begun to feel less unscrupulous in taking the post of governess, knew the Errols. Conscience, told me that I necessary qualifications and hearts of your had ever been tastes were p

thought and little beauty, I was not dustrious. the chance of marrying; fond of these impediments, I had such a merous standard in my mind of what a myse' d ought to be, that there was scarcely hav' shadow of a possibility that I should ever b meet a man to please me.

If I had only possessed sufficient income to keep me either in a humble home of my own, or boarding with a quiet family—Effie and Richard, when they were married for instance—I thought

I could have been perfectly happy. My books, my love of nature, my day dreams—which were not the less delightful because they lacked a hero of flesh and blood—and the deep interest I should feel in all Effie's concerns, would be amply sufficient to satisfy the moderate cravings of my nature for enjoyment. But destiny had willed it otherwise, and I had no choice but to play in some fashion or other (I feared it would be a very clumsy one) the part assigned me in life's noisy battle.

The sun went down while I meditated on these things, but the air was still warm, and believing myself forgotten by the party in doors, I should have remained some time longer in that enchanting spot, had not a friend, whom I believed far more pleasantly engaged, come in charity to seek me.

It was Richard Errol, looking a little anxious



still, but happy, and full of that world-wide benevolence which such happiness usually inspires.

"I guessed I should find you in some untrodden solitude," he said, as in consideration of his still weak ankle I rose to meet him. "You will not thank me, Miss Heathcott, for breaking in so abruptly upon your meditations, but my mother is going, and wishes to say good night to you."

"I am really extremely obliged to you for taking the trouble to look for me; but is it not lovely here?"

"Very lovely. I believe I should become a dreamer myself amidst such scenes as these."

"But I am not a dreamer, Mr. Errol, as your words seem to imply. If you only knew how very prosaic and common-place my thoughts

have been this evening, you would not give me such a character."

"What have you been thinking about?"

The bluntness of the question amused me. Another man might have asked the same, but he would have done it so differently. Richard's manner, however, evinced no lack of interest, and therefore I told him, as we walked towards the house, the whole sum and substance of my reflections, and begged for his advice on the subject.

It was the first time I had ever voluntarily spoken to him of myself, and I think he was surprised. After a little consideration, he said very kindly:

"I enter entirely into your feelings, Miss Heathcott, and respect your scruples; but it seems to me that the very fact of your being conscious of your deficiencies would prevent

them from having any great weight. You would exert yourself to overcome them, and acquire a watchfulness over the opposing principles which would be of service both to you and to your pupils, and in the end give you, in all probability, the qualifications you feel to be necessary."

"Oh, no, you over-estimate my conscientiousness and strength of mind. I might be for ever regretting my unfitness for the task I had undertaken, but as for persevering in the Herculean labour of changing my nature, that, believe me, I could never do."

"I did not suppose you could. I only referred to the habits and the tastes of which you spoke as impediments to the right fulfilment of the duties of a governess."

"And are not habits and tastes the same as nature? I do not enter into your distinction."

“By nature I understand the heart and its affections, which you have no possible power of changing; but tastes and habits are quite as often the result of education and early associations, and may assuredly be improved or got rid of according to the will of the individual.”

“And why then are the heart and the affections beyond our tutoring?”

“I said that they were beyond our changing; once changed by that divine influence which *alone* can do it, we are commanded to keep them pure from earthly defilement; but I am wearying you perhaps, and certainly getting away from our original subject.”

“You are not wearying me, but I am dull about all those things which you consider so important. Theology is a study I have never been tempted to take up, but since I have lived in

your family I have been much more favourably inclined towards it. If all who profess saintship were like your dear mother and some others amongst you, I should have no shrinking from the community."

"And yet an abstract admiration of Christians and Christianity will never advance you a single step towards the inner temple, Miss Heathcott. You must occupy the publican's place before the golden gates will be unlocked for you."

I believe he spoke poetically for the sake of interesting me more in the subject.

"You mean, doubtless, that I must feel myself to be a sinner; but I can assure you I have never questioned the fact."

"Possibly not, but had you felt it as the publican did, and as all do who go to the Great Physician for healing, you and I should be speak-

ing at the present moment a language familiar alike to both."

"I wish it were so," I exclaimed, with an earnestness which was quite foreign to my manner, whatever it might be to my feelings.

"Do you?" said Richard quietly (and his quietness just then chilled me more than it had ever done before); "then remember, Miss Heathcott, there is a teacher ready at hand."

In my confusion and ignorance, I fancied he meant himself; and recalling my indignation when I had suspected him and Effie of a desire to make me their pupil in religious knowledge, I smiled to myself as I replied:

"Thank you very much, but I fear I should soon tire your patience were I to become your pupil."

"*My* pupil, Miss Heathcott," he said in un-

feigned surprise, and in accents of humility that were then incomprehensible to me, "surely you could not think that I was proposing to become your master? The teacher I alluded to must be a divine one, even Him who said to a believing follower in days of old—'Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto you, but my father who is in heaven.'"

His words and manner awed and subdued me. I wished our conversation had not taken this serious turn, but we were now close to the house, and I therefore said:

"At any rate I may thank you for your sincerity and faithfulness, and should I require at some future time any preliminary human instructions or advice concerning these things which you have learnt so thoroughly, I may consider myself privileged to apply to Effie's husband—is it not so?"

This allusion to his coming happiness seemed to touch and please him.

“The privilege would be mine,” he answered, “could I in the smallest degree prove of service to you, even as a wooden sign-post, in designating the road. With regard to the matter of your future occupation, I will, if you permit me, talk to you on another opportunity. There is my mother looking out for us at the door.”

As it was now quite late, and Effie had already been sent off to bed, the farewells were quickly spoken, and mother and son set off on their homeward journey. Miss Seton kept me a little while to scold me for exposing myself unshawled and unbonneted to the evening air, and for allowing my tea to get cold; but she must have seen that I was not in a sociable or conversable mood, and so with a kind good night from brother



and sister, I was at length permitted to leave them, and to join Effie, whose blue eyes I found wide open, gazing abstractedly at the silvery light made by the moonbeams on the wall opposite her bed.

## CHAPTER XX.

## FAREWELL.

AFTER asking me why I had run away so abruptly, and where I had been all the evening, Effie seemed content to resume her former state of quiescent observation, and I was at present too much wrapt up in my own thoughts (selfish thoughts they were) to have any inclinations to rouse her.

But, as I was at length lying down, the peculiar expression of that quiet face struck me, and

bending to kiss it ere I said good night, I enquired of my companion whether she had spent an agreeable evening.

Evading a direct answer to this very simple question, Effie said only :

“I am afraid Richard is still anxious about my health. He quite agrees with me that I ought to return home as soon as possible. I suppose you know that we are to leave here the day after to-morrow.”

“Yes, Miss Seton told me that this was the arrangement.”

I fancied that some question or remark was hovering on Effie's lips, but that she lacked courage to utter it. Her eyes had a wistful, almost pleading look in them, as during our brief dialogue her face was turned towards me, and the rays of our night lamp fell full upon it.

I thought it best, however, to give her no encouragement for talking, as the little teasing cough always came on with the least exertion, and I had for some minutes closed my eyes to show her that I meant to sleep, when in a timid, hesitating voice, and passing her hand caressingly over my face she pronounced the single word:

“Dora.”

“Well, my child,” I replied instantly, “what is it? don’t you feel well?”

“Yes, thank you, but I thought perhaps there would be no harm in just asking you before you went to sleep, whether you knew about Mr. Vincent’s intention of leaving England, prior to Mrs. Errol’s mentioning it this afternoon?”

“I did know it, Effie, what then?”

“Oh, nothing; I am glad he is going, very glad.”

“I am sure you are, my darling, and now try to get some sleep.”

Whether this rational advice was quickly followed I cannot say—I know only that Effie told me in the morning that she had passed a pretty good night, and there was nothing very striking in her looks to contradict the assertion. But when I awoke I found her reading in a little bible which she kept under her pillow, and on my suggesting that these early studies would probably give her a headache, she said earnestly :

“Never mind the headache, Dora ; persons who are weak like me require more frequent nourishment than others. In reading the word of God, I learn the real insignificance of those things which so often give us a heartache in this treacherous world. And I am reminded, too, that when the battle appears the hardest, we

may expect a help that *must* make us victorious. Look what a beautiful verse I have found."

And with tears of gratitude—I am sure they were—in her pure eyes, she showed me these words:—

"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."

"And you believe fully, Effie," I said, "that whatever enemy assails those who put their trust in God, will, according to this text, be driven back and overcome?"

"With my whole heart and soul I believe it," she replied solemnly, "and therefore I know that weak, and wretched, and rebellious as I have been, I shall not be left to myself, I shall be helped and kept through all."

What that 'all,' implied I needed not to ask, but I was truly glad to find that Effie had no

longer an accusing conscience to weigh her down and make her question, as she had done that day in the wood, the sincerity of the faith she had professed before the world.

I was beginning to understand enough of the religion of my friends to see the moral influence it exercised was not on the outer life alone; and that the heart and conscience which it governed and regulated, could only taste of peace but by walking hand in hand with the holy monitor to which they had once sworn allegiance.

Even then, when my reluctant feet had not even touched the threshold of the sacred temple, I discovered a marvellous and supernatural beauty in that principle by which the whole inner life of a feeble, erring mortal could be influenced to recoil from the very touch of sin, and to aim at that purity and holiness which qualifies for the enjoyment of heaven.

Effie laid aside her book and talked to me cheerfully while I was dressing. Mrs. Errol had made her promise not to rise till after breakfast, and then she was to write to her father and tell him that she was coming home. I don't think she would have been very happy in this anticipation had it not been that I was to accompany her, for I gathered from what she told me of her father, that he was a man of a studious, unsociable character, with whom his young timid daughter could have few sympathies or tastes in common.

When Effie had written her letter, she begged so earnestly to have a short stroll on the lawn, that Miss Seton was won to give her consent, and escorted by the dear old gentleman and myself, our precious invalid was gently paraded to and fro in the sunshine, till a faint bloom returned to her white cheeks, and the languor of



her whole aspect had almost entirely disappeared.

The doctor on his arrival declared himself surprised and delighted with the progress his interesting patient had made, and as the cough was unquestionably less frequent than it had been the day before, I pleased myself by believing that my apprehensions had been premature, and again placed my darling in the foreground of all my dreams for the future.

The next day, parting with sincere regret from our kind and hospitable friends, we returned to Bloomsbury Square, and began to make immediate preparations for going into the country.

Mr. Seymour had written to say he would meet his daughter and myself half way between Lismore, the village where he resided, and London. The first part of our journey we were to

travel under the protection of Richard junior, who from some cause or other, probably the alarm he had experienced when Effie was taken ill, had recently paid her much more open attention than was habitual to him.

In the excitement of preparing for going home and receiving from the family with whom she was to be connected, numberless proofs of affection and esteem, lavished upon her during these last few days with love's own generosity, Effie appeared to shake off all remains of her languor and debility. The cough which had occasioned so much anxiety, was seldom heard, the colour returned to her cheek, the brightness to her eye, and we were all beginning to forget that we had a fragile flower amongst us.

Only when alone with me sometimes did I remark any failure of the cheerful, girlish spirits which were usually so natural and so charming;

and then it was less a manifestation of actual sadness than a certain restless dissatisfaction, as if she was constantly looking out for something that never occurred.

At last it struck me that perhaps she expected to see Mr. Vincent again before he left England. The girls spoke frequently about the sudden cessation of his visits, and Isabel was unquestionably pining, though her high, proud spirit rebelled against the weakness, and helped her to hide it from common observation. But whenever the subject above alluded to was discussed, she would flush and become pale a dozen times in a minute, even while joining with light and laughing voice in the conversation, whereas Effie would bend over her work with a look of touching humility (as if the wrong her heart had unconsciously committed still oppressed her mind) and never speak one word.

Sometimes when Richard came home to dinner he would mention casually that he had seen his friend, but that he was too busy to give up even one evening to them at present. If poor Isabel had guessed what hindered him from coming, she would have counted the very hours till Effie and myself were away.

I used to wonder whether he knew what day was fixed for our departure, and whether he would have strength of mind to deny himself even one farewell look and word.

It was our last evening in Bloomsbury Square. Up to this time Richard had never sought to renew the subject of my conversation with him, the night he found me in Mr. Seton's ground, but now I saw that he intended doing so, for the moment he joined us after dinner he came over to where I was sitting, and, quietly placing Catherine, who had been talking with me, on

the sofa by Effie, took possession himself of the vacant chair.

"I hope you did not think I had forgotten you, Miss Heathcott," he began, in his kindest manner, "for if so, you did me as well as yourself injustice. I have been turning over in my mind lately all that you spoke to me about a week ago, and I believe I have succeeded, in some measure, in clearing the way before you."

"You are very good," I replied, wondering with all my might what he had been doing.

"I think," he continued, "that your scruples as to accepting a situation as governess refer to your assumed unfitness for forming the characters of those who might be entrusted to your care."

I bowed, and he went on:

"This difficulty would then be met were you simply to undertake, and make it clearly under-

stood that you do so, to give instruction in one accomplishment or branch of knowledge only, leaving the mental culture of your pupils to their parents or other individuals of their selection; do you quite understand me?"

"Yes; but I am not enough of a proficient in any single accomplishment to carry out this plan. Unfortunately I know a little of almost everything, and really excel in nothing."

"I presume you could teach your own language to foreigners?"

"Well, I might certainly do that; but this would involve the necessity of my quitting England?"

"Would you object to do so?"

"Perhaps not; but I have never thought of it. Your idea, however, considering the circumstances of the case, is an excellent one, and I am greatly indebted to you for suggesting it."

"But I have done more than this. I have heard of a situation that I fancy will suit you."

"You have? This is indeed more than I expected—what and where is it?"

If my voice did not express all the gratitude it ought to have done, it was because my foolishly foreboding mind gave a startled glance into the future thus suddenly presented to it as a reality, and shrank in dismay from the cold, barren view.

"I will tell you all I can. Mrs. Vincent has several friends residing on the continent (it is indeed chiefly on this account that she wishes to take her son abroad), and from one of these acquaintances she received some days ago a letter, asking her to recommend an English governess who was qualified to teach her own language grammatically and elegantly, and who would not

object to live in retirement during the whole year round. It is in the family of a French countess, young, rich, and handsome (report says), and yet content to bury herself, with her husband and two little children, in an old romantic chateau on the banks of the Garonne. What do you think of the prospect as regards yourself?"

"It has at least an attractive face under the veil, the old romantic chateau especially, as I am sure by your smile you foresaw. But when should I be required to go?"

"Not before Christmas, which is the best part of it all, because we should thus secure you until that time. The salary for France is liberal, two thousand francs a year, and I have heard that on the continent governesses are usually treated with much more consideration than they receive in this country."



"In short, it appears to be my destiny. Have you mentioned it to your mother?"

"To nobody but yourself, except, indeed, that I begged Mrs. Vincent not to look out elsewhere till I had obtained the decision of a friend of my sisters, who was bent on making herself independent."

He smiled again on saying this, and I was just on the point of asking him whether he disapproved of my determination itself, when a sudden exclamation, coming simultaneously from all the ladies in the room, made me look hastily towards the door, on the threshold of which stood Arthur Vincent!

"At last," said Richard, rising to welcome his truant friend, who, whatever command he might have have obtained over his heart, had certainly acquired very little over his countenance; "why, you are looking as if you had just

come from cutting some poor fellow's leg off, Arthur. What's the matter?"

Without replying, except by a forced smile, to this question, the new arrival went round and shook hands with the ladies of the family, and then accepted a chair by Mrs. Errol, who had just begun to pour out the tea.

"You are only in time," said that lady, all unconscious that she was treading on slippery ground, "to say farewell to two of our party, for I am sorry to tell you that we are losing both Miss Heathcott and Miss Seymour to-morrow."

"I heard so," replied the gentleman, with a pretty successful effort to speak indifferently, "and it was on this account that I managed to look in to-night."

"They would have been very sorry to have missed the pleasure of shaking hands with you

once more," continued dear, innocent Mrs. Errol, looking round for a moment smilingly on Effie and myself, "and, indeed, now I think of it, Miss Seymour has had no opportunity of thanking you for the timely assistance you rendered her the day of our unfortunate picnic."

"But she is very grateful, nevertheless, as Mr. Vincent will believe," I said, coming hastily to the rescue, for I saw by poor Effie's blanched face and trembling lips that she was in no condition to make a speech, and I determined if possible to shield her.

"Much more so than my slight service merited, no doubt," replied Arthur, scarcely venturing to glance towards our side of the room; "but we will not recur to such a disastrous subject. I am delighted to find that both the young ladies have recovered from the effects of their fright and drenching."

"Oh, yes, they are perfect heroines!" exclaimed Isabel, drawing her chair to the tea table, and looking so happy and excited that I quite felt for her; "if ever I write a book, Mr. Vincent, I mean to call it 'Dora and Effie,' and to open with that remarkable thunder storm in that delightful wood."

"It would doubtless be a most interesting production," replied the gentleman she addressed, with an air of absence, which it was fortunate for the poor girl that she did not remark.

"And then for heroes," she continued, lightly and gaily, "we must perforce be content with you and Richard, that solemn brother of mine, whose very aspect is enough to quench all the romance that I should disperse through the three volumes. He would suit Dora, however, whose temperament is scarcely more mercurial than his own, while Effie would thus be left—but good—

ness me! how sober everybody is looking. I thought my suggestion would have been received with enthusiasm."

We had all come to the table while Isabel was talking this nonsense, and certainly there was not a countenance amongst the whole party that gave her the slightest encouragement to proceed. Mr. Errol, though far from a morose or severe man, particularly disliked levity in his children, and was frequently endeavouring to check this tendency in the character of his youngest daughter. The mother and elder sisters never smiled when the father of the family frowned, and the rest of us were too nearly interested in Bella's impromptu romance to have any satisfaction in listening to its details.

The one, however, who looked the most displeased and embarrassed of all was Mr. Vincent, and though Isabel had perhaps no notion of the

origin of his discontent, she valued his esteem too highly to risk the loss or diminution of it for the sake of displaying her powers of wit and pleasantry.

During the somewhat awkward pause that succeeded her foolish rattling, Richard, junior, said abruptly :

“ And when do you really start, Vincent?”

“ In about ten days from this time, I believe,” was the reply, in a voice that vainly sought to be cheerful.

“ And you spend the autumn and winter in Paris?”

“ It is not quite decided yet. My mother talks, if her health will permit, of getting on to Rome.”

“ Well, it will be a delightful trip for you. Don't you feel that you are a particularly lucky fellow?”

Poor Arthur Vincent! how could he reply to such a question? Surely few lucky fellows ever looked so rueful on being asked concerning their happiness.

"I am afraid," he said at length, "that I am scarcely grateful enough for my good fortune. I have no mania for lionizing in foreign countries."

"Bad taste, my friend, and yet I confess to a similar weakness. The absence of domestic comfort and fireside enjoyment on the continent, would, in my estimation, be ill atoned for by its sunny skies and buoyant atmosphere."

Richard was certainly unfortunate in his choice of a subject this evening.

Everybody saw, however, that Mr. Vincent was not himself, and with the exception of Isabel, I think we all felt relieved when, soon after tea, he announced his intention of quitting us.

Effie and myself were the last he came to in saying farewell, and having spoken a few kind and courteous words to me, he turned to my quiet, statue-like companion, whose features had at length been brought into partial subjection, and expressed nothing more than a forced and unnatural immobility.

For one moment their eyes and their hands met, but I heard no words from either. He must, I suppose, have said good-bye, but if so, the voice was choked and inaudible, even at the short distance at which I was sitting.

But as for Effie, I am quite sure that she did not even attempt to reply to him, unless that momentary glance had a language which he understood.

It was all over, however, in less than a minute, and when I had courage to look up again from my work I saw only the back of Arthur



Vincent's head, as, escorted by Richard, junior, he was passing out at the door.

And the currents of two lives, which should, according to human judgment, have been blended into one, were thus abruptly and noiselessly divided for ever.

## CHAPTER XXI.

## LEAVING LONDON.

ALTHOUGH Effie and myself no longer shared the same room, we frequently indulged in the girlish habit of undressing together, and having half an hour's chat before bidding each other a final good night. My poor little friend had looked so pale and tired after Mr. Vincent's departure, that Mrs. Errol insisted on her going to bed before our usual hour for separating, and I therefore hoped to find her asleep when I went

upstairs myself, and only intended peeping into her room just to be assured that she had obeyed the orders she had received.

"Why, Effie, you naughty child, what do you mean by not being in bed? I have a great mind to call Mrs. Errol."

Such was my salutation when I found the culprit not only sitting up, but writing away as fast as she could in a small book I had never seen till now, and of course looking much paler and wearier than she had done down stairs.

"Don't be angry with me, Dora," she replied, meeting my indignant eyes with a soft, deprecating expression in her own. "I really waited up thinking you would be coming to undress here as usual, and knowing that if I went to bed it would be impossible to sleep so early."

"Nonsense, Effie, you *must* sleep, or how will you be fit for your journey to-morrow?"

"But I mean to sleep, Dora, indeed I do. See, I am going to begin undressing at once."

"But what have you been writing in that mysterious-looking book at this hour of the night? I did not know that you were an authoress."

"I an authoress, Dora! what an absurd idea!" and then, with sudden gravity, "this book is a little private journal which I have kept for the last two years, though not always regularly."

"Oh, then I must ask no more questions, but you might have waited till the morning to chronicle the events of the day. Do you know, my silly child, that you are looking more like a spectre than a creature of flesh and blood."

Without noticing this observation in any way—I don't think she even heard it—Effie said

abruptly, and with the faintest of rose tints suffusing her marble cheeks:

"Dora, you are welcome to see what I have written to-night, if it will in the slightest degree interest you. Perhaps it is right that you *should* see it."

"As you please, Effie; but since I am presumptuous enough to believe that I can read pretty clearly in that guileless little heart of yours, as it is, I have no curiosity about this journal."

"Nevertheless, you had better read what I have just written. Look, it is these two last pages."

As I saw that she really wished it, and supposed that there was nothing more than I knew or guessed, I took the book from her hands, and read the following:—

"I am so very very thankful that it is over

at last, that we have said good bye for ever in the present world (I am certain that it will be for ever), and that my weak, foolish heart is now so calm and still. I believe I can bear anything but an accusing conscience; this is indeed for me the iron that enters the soul. I wanted to see him once more, not for any personal gratification, but to assure myself that he was not suffering too much from the knowledge which I suppose Dora imparted to him, and which I ought, if nobody else would, to have communicated to him sooner. For I saw that he loved me long ago; I believed it at least, and the belief was so intoxicating that I weakly and wickedly suffered it to go on, silencing conscience by telling it that I gave him no encouragement, but treated him with a studied coldness that was in direct contrast to the warmth of all the rest of the family. Ah! but I have been dearly paid

for my folly and my sin. I have seen that noble heart cast down, that bright sunny spirit quenched, and I have been made too to look down into the depths of my own heart, and to shudder at the sight. Perhaps I required this lesson; doubtless I was too confident of my strength and firmness of principle, but that *he* should suffer also, he who was wholly innocent of offence, this is indeed the crowning sorrow of my punishment, and will harass and torment me when all merely selfish regrets shall be banished for ever. But have I not decided that they *are* banished for ever now? Oh, yes, it must be so, or why do I feel to-night so calm and still? There may be another reason for this, the conviction daily growing upon me, that my pilgrimage will soon be over, that my days on earth are numbered. I do not say that I desire to die, but I think the world has fewer charms for me than

it had, and I feel painfully and tremblingly that I have done no good with the talent—it is but a little one—entrusted to my care. This, however, at least I know, that my earnest desire *now* is to put aside every feeling, and every thought that savours more of the wilderness than of the promised land, and, whether by my life or death, to do the will of Him who hath washed me in His precious blood, and to glorify my Father who is in Heaven.”

Here the journal ended, and laying it down quickly, though reverently on the table, and imprinting one kiss upon the cheek that was by this time pressed against the scarcely morecolorless pillow, I hurried from the room to hide from my darling the strong emotion which her innocent revelations had awakened in my mind.

The interest I had felt from the very first in the touching little romance, that I alone of all



the family had discovered, was deepened a hundred fold by the sweet confiding frankness with which Effie had permitted me to look into the most hidden sanctuary of her wounded heart, but every thought in connection with this earthly attachment and its too common result, was for the present chased from my mind, by the much more serious apprehensions which poor Effie's mournful forebodings of an early death excited.

I do not know that I should, under ordinary circumstances, have yielded to them any particular importance, for superstition had never ranked amongst my weaknesses, but I could not shut my eyes to the fact of Effie's extreme delicacy, and that frequent "look of other worlds," in her sweet face, which I was well assured rarely proved a deception. And besides all this, she was so unspeakably dear to me, dearer than ever in her sorrow and humility, that it was

natural my heart should quail and sink down at the admission of even the probability of losing her.

And then poor Richard, whose deep seated, manly love, had staked its all, at least of earthly happiness, on this one venture, how would it fare with him in case of shipwreck? I remembered Catherine's thoughts about human idols uneasily now, and in the unbroken stillness and gloom of night, my fears grew into convictions, that not only banished sleep for many weary hours, but pressed like an incubus, upon me, and refused even for one moment to depart.

It must have been near morning when I at length closed my eyes successfully, for I awoke unrefreshed at a later hour than usual, and found dear Effie leaning with tender, anxious looks over my bed.

"What is the matter?" I exclaimed, starting

up, and speaking I daresay like a person in a dream, "am I so very late?"

"Not late enough to make it necessary to look so frightened," she replied, with a smile that was meant to be unusually cheerful, "but I feared by not seeing you in my room that you had passed a bad night, and that I had been the cause. I was thoughtless in showing you that foolish journal, Dora. You must promise me to forget it all."

"And do you imagine I could keep such a promise, my child, even if I made it?" I asked, as she sat on the bed, and twined her arms lovingly round me.

"You must try at least, for indeed I would not for worlds be the occasion of unhappiness to you, and you know very well I am but a silly baby."

"But if the silly baby does not get fat and

rosy in the country, I shall scarcely succeed in forgetting the fright she has given me. Cruel Effie, if you only knew how I love you."

"Don't say another word, Dora, or I shall subside into something still more infantine than a baby, and my courage will all be wanting for the farewells of to-day."

"Get along with you then, and let me dress myself in peace. I don't want to appear a perfect fright at breakfast this last morning."

For I knew the moisture in those blue and tender eyes would be dangerously infectious if I continued to gaze at them, and I thought too, that the family she was about to leave had every claim on her society at this eleventh hour.

The morning meal, which was usually so cheerful and pleasant in Bloomsbury Square, had nothing of lightness or gaiety in it on the present

occasion. Everybody seemed to dread the separations that were about to take place, and although both the gentlemen exerted themselves to dispel the sadness that appeared to have crept over us all, they met with little success, because it was quite evident that their own smiles and pleasant words did not come from their hearts.

We were glad when the elder Richard gave the signal for leaving the table, by announcing that he had already outstayed his hour for going to the city.

His farewell was equally kind to Effie and myself, but there was a sudden pathos in his voice as he spoke the last words to the former that recalled strangely to my mind the first interview I had ever had with him, when he alluded, in the midst of our otherwise prosaic conversation, to the child he had buried at Florence.

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Effie cried a good deal as the worthy man she was to call father pressed her in his arms, and invoked the choicest blessings on her head; but he lingered not to see these tears which nature exacted from the tenderest hearted of her children. The mother and lover were at hand to console, and signing for me to follow him into the hall, he charged me to watch vigilantly over the poor girl who was so dear to them all, and to report faithfully as to her progress in health and strength.

Then, with all a father's kindness and consideration, he begged me to remember that I was leaving a home that would ever welcome me joyfully to its bosom again, and urged me in the character of an adopted daughter of the family to apply fearlessly to him for all my temporal need.

How could I help blending all my hopes and

interests with these dear, large-hearted, word-unsullied people?

We had only two more hours before our journey was to commence, and as during part of that time Effie was closeted with Mrs. Errol, receiving, I suppose, numberless maternal injunctions concerning her health, Richard took this opportunity of referring to the subject he had named to me the previous evening. I had, in truth, scarcely given the matter a single thought since, but relying on his judgment, I had no hesitation in authorizing him to accept the situation for me, although I made a mental reservation to the effect that if Effie was not restored to health I would not leave her.

I can remember nothing very distinctly concerning the adieux which took place at eleven o'clock between those who were departing and those who were to remain. A

confused scene rises up before me of repeated embracings,

“ And those last words which never were the last,”

falling from quivering lips, and yet sinking deeply into the hearts they were meant to cheer.

And then comes the noisy coach, and the bustling driver helping to put up our really moderate amount of luggage, and then our getting in ourselves and pulling down our veils, through which, however, we could still see the three dear girls as they stood crying and kissing their hands to us at the door, and forming a screen for the little mother, who in spite of her pretended smiles, was crying more heartily than them all.

And then tears, sentiment, and regrets become mingled in my recollections with unpleasant



joltings over rough stones, and equally unpleasant collisions with other impatient vehicles. And in the midst of this unromantic and uninteresting experience I hear Richard's voice whispering gently and entreatingly to my companion :

“Don't cry so, Effie. This parting is only for a little while.”

Poor Richard!

END OF VOL. I.









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